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Valerie Grove meets astrologer Shelley von Strunkel
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Prince 'will not marry again'

Lonely role chosen after divorce goes through

By ALAN HAMILTON AND PHILIP WEBSTER

THE Prince of Wales made it clear yesterday that he had no intention of remarrying after the inevitable divorce that will end his 14-year-old marriage.

His statement, issued through a spokesman at St James's Palace, is intended to allay the fears of politicians, churchmen and the public that he would marry Camilla Parker Bowles, taking a divorced woman as queen consort.

The Prince's declaration suggests that, on his eventual accession, he is resigned to reigning alone. Privately, however, his staff acknowledge that neither the Prince nor anyone else can be expected to foresee the distant future.

John Major strongly backed the Queen's decision to urge the Prince and Princess of Wales to divorce when she told



The Prince sets off to visit hospices near Highgrove

Queen the day after the Princess of Wales's Panorama interview.

Mr Major has since held meetings with both the Prince and Princess of Wales at which the implications of a divorce are thought to have been discussed.

At his meeting with the Princess at Kensington Palace on Wednesday Mr Major is understood to have spoken of the role that the Government is prepared to give her. The strong view at Westminster is that the Princess and her advisers will insist on a position as a "goodwill envoy" as the price of agreeing to a divorce.

But Mr Major is also aware of the Foreign Office view that she should have no formal ambassadorial role in which she would be seen as speaking for the British Government.

Buckingham Palace officials said that the Prince had already informed the Queen that he agreed with her letter, sent to both parties earlier this week, urging an early divorce. He had also informed the Princess that he favoured such a course.

Yesterday the Prince spent

much of the day visiting cancer patients at hospices in Cheltenham and Burleigh, Gloucestershire, an activity much favoured by his wife. He took gifts of his Duchy Original Oat Biscuits and organic vegetables from his farm at Highgrove.

The Princess, who made her usual visit to her gym at the Chelsea Harbour Club, accompanied by Prince William and Prince Harry, has not yet sent any reply, and appears in no hurry to give a decision. The Queen who spent the day at Sandringham recording her Christmas broadcast, has not taken the silence as discourtesy, and would rather that any settlement be right rather than rushed.

But the Princess has let it be known through friends that her two principal lawyers, Lord Mischon and Paul Butner, have begun their Christmas holidays and that no formal answer to the Queen's request is likely before January. Her reluctance to be hurried does not bode well for a clean and fast settlement.

The Princess remains in touch with Buckingham Pal-

ace, as talks with Sir Robert Fellowes, the Queen's private secretary, and other senior courtiers continue over a satisfactory role for her.

The moves of the last 36 hours have been largely welcomed by politicians and churchmen. The Ven George Austin, Archdeacon of York and a prominent Church of England conservative, said that the Prince's assertion that he did not intend to remarry removed any obstacle to him becoming king, but only so long as he avoided renewing his relationship with Mrs Parker Bowles. "My guess is that he will not continue the relationship because I think he wants to be a good king, acceptable to everyone."

Lord St John of Fawsley, a former Cabinet minister and constitutional expert, said that the Prince's declaration that he did not intend to remarry was another example of him putting his duty before personal desires. "While he has a perfect right to marry or change his mind, that statement is to be very warmly welcomed. It removes a source of gossip and speculation," Lord St John said.

Lord Blake, the constitutional historian, said the Prince's announcement made no difference to his constitutional and legal claims to the Throne. "It may affect public opinion; I would have thought it would not damage his position at all."

Tony Blair, the Labour leader, said: "I think most people, myself included, would want to see, should a divorce take place, some role for Princess Diana and some chance for her to use her undoubted ability and esteem that she has in the interests of the country. She is a popular figure. She

Continued on page 2, col 5



The Princess arrives at her Chelsea gym. She was accompanied by her sons

It could all be over in 3 months

By FRANCES GIBB
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

THE Prince and Princess of Wales could be divorced within three months under the "quickest" divorce procedure with the Princess's consent.

But even if she does not consent, Prince Charles may be able to divorce her, without resorting to accusations of adultery, on the ground that the couple have lived separate lives for five years although they have been formally separated only since 1992.

A couple may divorce if the marriage has irretrievably broken down. The grounds for this are: adultery, desertion, unreasonable behaviour or, if both sides agree to divorce, living apart for two years.

Prince Charles would not wish to base a petition on adultery, despite the Princess of Wales's television confession. So if her agreement to divorce is obtained, living apart for five years is the most likely ground.

Both the Prince and the Princess will be represented by top-drawer divorce lawyers: the Prince is using Farrer & Co, the Queen's Lincoln's Inn solicitors. He is likely to be represented by one of the youngest but most highly-regarded partners, Fiona Shackleton.

Leading the team for the Princess will be Lord Mischon of Mischon de Reya, backed by Anthony Julius.

Any settlement is likely to include a lump sum for the Princess — some say £15 million — on the basis of a clean break. The Queen would probably have to help out as the Prince's notional net income is thought to be little more than £2 million a year.

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him about at a recent Buckingham Palace meeting. The initiative came from the Queen but Mr Major, who had told the Queen of the belief at Westminster that an end to the marriage was now the best way out, said that he supported the move to bring matters to a head.

The public feud between the two had reached a point where senior politicians believed that the monarchy could be severely damaged and Mr Major was aware of that view when he saw the

Surgeon cleared over operation

A surgeon who removed a woman's womb despite discovering that she was pregnant has been cleared of illegally procuring an abortion.

Reginald Dixon admitted during his trial that he was wrong to continue the operation without the consent of his patient, Barbara Whitten. He said: "It is a great relief to see the end of nearly three years of stress for me, my family and Mrs Whitten." Page 5

Ritual mourning in Bethlehem

As Israeli troops completed the handover of Bethlehem to Palestinian control, a former chief rabbi ordered all Israelis who visit the area to read their clothes in ritual mourning at the switch. Rabbi Mordechai Eliahu made his ruling at the first meeting of rabbis from Jewish settlements since the killing of Yitzhak Rabin. Page 11

SATURDAY IN THE TIMES



The jumbo Christmas crossword and 36 magnams of Moët & Chandon to be won in Weekend

The Quiz of the Year, in the Magazine

Your guide to Christmas television and radio, in Vision

The great go-slow holiday starts

By JONATHAN PRYNN AND HARVEY ELLIOTT

HALF the population of Britain is expected to be on the move today as the Christmas getaway begins in earnest.

Traffic jams, snow and road works on 38 main routes are among the treats in store for an estimated 25 million people. Motoring organisations, showing a distinct lack of Christmas cheer, warned drivers to stagger their journeys by avoiding the late afternoon rush and to be prepared for hazards from snow drifts in the North to flooding on the South Coast, which is expecting one of the highest tides of the year.

Airports are preparing for one of the busiest days of the year with half a million people leaving in search of sun or snow. Those who stay at home may well find the snow comes to them. A belt which yesterday blanketed Wales and the Midlands, forcing dozens of schools to close early for the holidays, may return.

Prospects of a white Christmas were said to be "finely balanced" as warm Atlantic air fought for control of the weather with a blast of icy wind from the Continent.

Late shoppers will make it heavy going around out-of-town shopping centres throughout the weekend when for the first time there will be legal Sunday trading on the day before Christmas. "On the 30th anniversary of the 70mph speed limit most drivers will be reduced to a crawl," said a spokesman for the RAC. "One can only expect heavy congestion on most routes, but if you are travelling this evening please allow for delays, be patient and

drive safely." Hundreds of thousands of road cones were being cleared last night by the Highways Agency to ease traffic. All main maintenance works will be suspended over the holiday period. However, 38 major sets of roadworks on motorways and trunk roads will remain closed off for safety reasons.

The agency has a fleet of 300 snowploughs and 20 snow blowers on standby to keep the motorways clear if there are heavy falls. Up to 500,000 tonnes of salt have been stockpiled at 100 sites around the motorway network.

Yesterday's snow caused serious problems in Gloucestershire where 14 lorries were stranded for up to two hours at the bottom of an icy hill on the A417 Cirencester road. A lorry driver stranded in a snowdrift on a country road near Newtown, Powys, was rescued after more than seven hours in his cab.

In Wiltshire a husband, his pregnant wife and their three children had to be rescued by firemen when he missed warning signs and drove into flood water after the river Avon broke its banks.

In Shropshire a lorry driver was fighting for his life after a pile-up in a snowstorm on the M54 near Telford, which closed the eastbound carriageway for more than seven hours. Scotland saw its coldest temperatures of the winter with Edinburgh reaching -10C and Aviemore in the Highlands -12C.

Photograph and Forecast, page 18

Retiring Charlton grabs Major's spotlight

FROM ARTHUR LEATHLEY IN DUBLIN

JOHN MAJOR's plans for a most-the-people tour in Dublin were overshadowed last night by the arrival of Irish hero Jack Charlton, who announced his retirement as the national team's manager yesterday.

Mr Major had hoped to use his meeting with John Bruton, the Irish Prime Minister, as an opportunity to visit one of Dublin's public houses to underline the looser sec-

urity arrangements which now exist. However, the arrival of Big Jack immediately drew attention away from the prime ministerial event with television cameras and Christmas shoppers following Mr Charlton.

As the two Prime Ministers considered the next stages of the Northern Ireland peace process, Dubliners poured into Baggot's Inn, the pub owned by Charlton and managed by his son John. On his arrival customers immediately launched into a chant of

"don't go Jack". However, Charlton was unwilling to comment on the announcement by the Irish Football Association that he would retire as manager after ten years. He was worshipped by Ireland's football fans for giving their team international respectability and guiding them to two successive World Cup finals.

When Charlton was given the freedom of Dublin, Con Houlihan, the Irish journalist, wrote: "He is already a freeman of every city, town,

village and hamlet in the republic."

Mr Major's aides said last night that the Prime Minister was unlikely to be making his planned visit to another hotel near Mr Charlton's pub but said the reason was shortage of time rather than fear that the Prime Minister would be ignored in the shadow of his fellow Englishman.

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Longest party, page 32

Resignation decision, page 36



Charlton: national hero

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Fisheries ministers dig in for battle on quotas

FROM CHARLES BRENNER
IN BRUSSELS

TONY BALDREY, the Fisheries Minister, embarked last night with his European colleagues on a marathon Brussels bargaining session to fix new catch quotas, with the outcome unlikely to placate either Britain's fishing industry or Conservative Eurosceptics.

"It's not foreigners that we have to fear here, it's the simple fact that there are too many vessels chasing too few fish," said Mr Baldrey after an initial session with Luis Atienza, the Spanish Agriculture Minister and current president of the fisheries council. He was sure, he said, that he could achieve a favourable deal for Britain.

Spain, like Britain, France, Portugal and other fishing nations wants to extract the maximum possible for its fishermen from the annual session to fix the total catch allowed for each species in Europe's waters. Their starting point is a recommendation by the European Commission, which draws on scientific assessments of how much can be caught without endangering already depleted stocks.

The Commission wants to cut the British mackerel quota from 200,000 tonnes to 150,000 tonnes. English Channel sole from over 500 tonnes to just over 300 tonnes, and North Sea plaice from just over 30,000 tonnes to just over 20,000 tonnes. The national shares of the total catch are apportioned under an existing formula.

Mr Baldrey is seeking to increase the tonnages of fish assigned to the British fleet for sole, mackerel, plaice and hake, in order to soften the impact of a deal that will inevitably amount to an overall reduction.

Supporters of Kenneth Clarke sprang to his defence yesterday amid renewed Conservative feuding over Europe after the fishing rebellion. Tristan Garel-Jones, a former Minister for Europe, said the Chancellor's "arrogant" right-wing critics were threatening the party and accused them of disloyalty.

Province 'not fooled by republican soft soap'

Major insists Sinn Fein must share blame for IRA outrages

BY NICHOLAS WATT
IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

JOHN MAJOR launched a stinging attack on Sinn Fein and the IRA yesterday, describing claims that they were separate organisations as "laughable".

Speaking during a visit to Northern Ireland, the Prime Minister condemned IRA punishment beatings and came close to blaming the terrorists for the "disgraceful" killing of three alleged drugs dealers in Belfast this month.

He promised that the security forces would try to discover whether the IRA was behind the shootings, and said that the killings underlined the importance of decommissioning terrorist arms.

His comments came after Sinn Fein denied involvement in the killings and sought to distance itself from punishment beatings.

Speaking on his first engagement of the day, in Ballymena, Co Antrim, Mr Major said he had suspicions about who was behind the killings, adding: "There are several things that are being said and done at the moment by Sinn Fein and the IRA that are frankly, bluntly, incorrect."

"They are trying to maintain a fiction that I think most people in Northern Ireland will find laughable, that Sinn Fein and the IRA are wholly separate organisations. We know that not to be true, the people of Northern Ireland know that not to be true."

The Prime Minister said that the people of Northern Ireland would not be fooled by Sinn Fein's "soft soap" while republicans continued to carry out punishment beatings. "It is no longer acceptable behaviour to decide themselves that they are the judge, the jury and the determiner of the sentence for people who, if they have committed crimes, should be before the civil courts."

The Prime Minister's comments prompted a furious response from Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein. "Not only are we two separate entities but in the course of our dialogue with representatives of Mr Major's Government



John Major meeting Christmas shoppers during his visit to Ballymena yesterday. Crowds cheered when he arrived.

they have acknowledged that Sinn Fein and the IRA are not the same," he said.

Mr Adams said that people wished they were celebrating a peace settlement this Christmas. "Unfortunately we are not, and the responsibility for that lies with Mr John Major. How do we get peace? Through talking. Who is blocking talks? Mr Major. No one else."

Mr Major received a warm reception during his visit to the Province, his third this year. A Protestant crowd in

Ballymena cheered him as he arrived at the town hall, where children from both sides of the community sang carols.

He was welcomed, too, at the predominantly nationalist town of Downpatrick, Co Down. Mr Major spent about 30 minutes shaking hands with shoppers before having coffee and doughnuts in a café with Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary, and Eddie McGrady, the local Social Democratic and Labour Party MP.

Afterwards Mr Major said

he was delighted by the reception he had received throughout the Province. "We have made huge progress towards turning a ceasefire into a permanent peace. The thing I would most wish to see next year is further progress down that route. I think it is possible. It is an opportunity that we may not have for many years and it may not readily reappear."

Mr McGrady said the visit had illustrated the benefits of peace. "We can all mill about, shake hands, walk about —

things we could not have done 18 months ago," Mr Major later flew to Dublin for talks on the peace process with John Bruton, his Irish counterpart.

Two Scots Guards lost their appeal yesterday against conviction and life sentences for murdering a Belfast teenager three years ago. James Fisher, 27, and Mark Wright, 22, said they had opened fire because they believed that 18-year-old Peter McBride was carrying a bomb and their lives were in danger.

Passenger jets were 200ft from colliding

Two jet aircraft carrying 246 passengers came within 200ft of a mid-air collision as they approached Heathrow. A year-long investigation by the Civil Aviation Authority found the co-pilot of a Lufthansa jet had mistakenly selected 6,000ft instead of 8,000ft on the aircraft's instrument panel. The mistake, in November last year, was spotted by the captain of the German aircraft only as the A320 Airbus descended below the required level and was almost on top of a crowded British Midland Boeing 737. Investigators put the incident in its most serious category A classification.

"This very serious occurrence and its cause typify the errors made by aircrew," they say in a new safety report. "It highlights the high risk potential of a mid-air collision when such errors are committed, particularly within the busy and congested air traffic environment of the terminal manoeuvring area airspace."

Guppy freedom bid fails

Darius Guppy, jailed for insurance fraud, failed to win his freedom in the High Court yesterday. Guppy, who has served five years for staging a bogus jewellery robbery in New York and then claiming insurance damages, had asked the judges to set aside a £227,000 compensation order for which he is serving three years for non-payment. The court, which was told that Guppy had declared himself bankrupt after telling the Court of Appeal that he had control of £227,000, dismissed his application.

Deportation deferred

The Home Office has backed down over plans to deport Abiodun Igbinidu, a Nigerian pro-democracy activist whose case provoked allegations of dirty tricks by Conservative Central Office involving confidential details of his case. The Home Office confirmed that deportation had been deferred pending fresh submissions. Mr Igbinidu, 25, who arrived in Britain last June on false papers claiming to be a student, will remain in at a detention centre in Oxfordshire.

Legacy of faith

Dr Joseph Needham, the late master of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, who died this year aged 94, has left £3,000 for his sermons to be published. As well as being a leading scientist, Sinologist and historian, Dr Needham was a Church of England lay reader who preached frequently in the college chapel and at Thaxted parish church, Essex. The Rev Richard Rowe, vicar of Thaxted, said: "He was one of life's great polymaths. He had the most incredible and intense theological mind."

Divorce reform attacked

Baroness Young, a former leader of the House of Lords, is to lead opposition to a shake-up in the divorce laws. The move is certain to reopen the controversy over divorce law reform in the wake of the Queen's letters to the Prince and Princess of Wales urging them to end their marriage. Lady Young is unhappy about the introduction of no-fault divorces on demand after a year and has attracted all-party support for a raft of amendments scheduled for debate at committee stage in the New Year.

Conman agrees to leave

Angelo Malanino, 46, a conman who posed as a Sicilian bishop, seduced two nuns and fathered children by them, agreed yesterday to be extradited to Austria to face allegations of deception and theft. He signed a document at Bow Street Magistrates' Court, central London, waiving his right to contest extradition. Malanino posed as a priest who had been ordained by the Pope. In a trail of debt and deception from Europe to York, he also duped people into believing he was a brain surgeon and heir to a fortune.

Scratchcard age ruling

Camelot, the organiser of the National Lottery, has asked the High Court to decide if a woman who sent her son to buy her a scratchcard should be allowed to keep the £10,000 prize. Prudence Beech claimed the prize on the ticket, bought from a newsagent in Scholar Green, Cheshire, by her son Clayton, who at 15 is a year under the legal age to buy a card. She has collected the £10,000 but Camelot, which has offered to pay her legal costs, has asked her not to spend it until the case is settled.

Killer 'mentally ill'

The brother of the pop star Boy George was committed at St Albans Crown Court yesterday to a secure mental hospital for an indefinite period for the manslaughter of his wife, Gerald O'Dowd, 32, had admitted stabbing his wife Gillian through the heart at their home in Tring, Hertfordshire, in September. The court heard evidence from three psychiatrists that O'Dowd had been suffering from a severe, "even terrifying" mental illness, possibly for six years.

Church widens net

Confessions are being heard by the Church of England over the information superhighway as part of a move to wrest the Internet from fringe religious cults. The diocese of Ely has set up the link to priests based at a centre in Cambridgeshire. Anglicans are also being offered daily Internet services and a Saint of the Day. The Rev Tom Ambrose, spokesman for the diocese, said: "You can get in touch with all sorts of oddball religious via the Internet... we are offering sensible answers to sensible questions."

Lawyer cleared of attack

A criminal lawyer was yesterday cleared of indecently assaulting a teenage student outside a nightclub. Richard Levene, 38, was alleged to have "tongued" the 19-year-old on July 1 as she left the club with a friend before groping her. He was said to have been so drunk that he ran off into a tree and smashed his glasses. Mr Levene, a lawyer with the Crown Prosecution Service, was found not guilty of indecent assault at Bristol Crown Court. He had said that he had been too drunk to remember much of the night.

Ministers' hospital blunders 'cost £37m'

BY NIGEL WILLIAMSON

MINISTERS took unacceptable risks in committing £37 million of public money to a showpiece private hospital that went bankrupt within months of opening, MPs said yesterday.

The all-party Public Accounts Committee said that the Scottish Office's evaluation of the hospital built by Health Care International near Glasgow had been "insufficiently thorough".

Forecasts of 5,000 patients a year were "wildly optimistic" and two government appraisals of the scheme failed to address the hospital's market prospects. "We consider that the department placed too much reliance on assessments carried out by others," the committee says.

Five months after the hospital opened in June 1994, fewer than 50 beds were in use. The hospital went into receivership in November last year but was subsequently taken over by a company owned by Abu Dhabi.

The hospital cost £181 million, of which £37 million was provided in direct and indirect public funding. The Government admits a direct loss to the taxpayer of £8.4 million.

A Scottish Office spokesman said last night: "The report makes a number of recommendations. The Government will consider these and respond to them."



Carling: denied claims

Libel win for Julia Carling

JULIA CARLING accepted a public apology and "substantial" libel damages yesterday over allegations in the *Daily Mail* that she cynically cashed in on the publicity generated by her separation from her husband Will, the England rugby captain.

A High Court judge heard that the first of two articles published in October accused Mrs Carling, presenter of *Capital Woman* on Carlton TV, of being prepared to employ the publicity agent Max Clifford in a bid to further her own career and hurt her husband. Her solicitor, Peter Crawford, said the "offensive and distressing" allegation was wholly untrue.

The second article, published the following day, compounded the damage by accusing her of manipulating the media and revelling in the publicity.

Prince says 'I will not marry again'

Continued from page 1
is held in very great esteem and it would be good to see her being able to perform some useful role for the country."

Paddy Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, said: "The end of any marriage is a very sad event. But it is now plain to all that this marriage has ended. It is in the interests of both parties, their children and the public duties that they must perform, that the situation is clarified by formalising the separation with a divorce

as soon as this can practically be arranged."

James Hill, chairman of the Tory constitutional committee, said: "It is obvious that neither of them wants to get back together. An amicable divorce should be done as soon as possible."

Sir David Steel, the Liberal Democrat MP, said: "We feel great sympathy for the couple, as we do for any couple going through this process, and I think they should be left to get on with it." He called for the

monarchy to be cut in size but said he would rather see a constitutional monarchy than a presidency. "There is great public sympathy for the couple. They have had to live out so much of their private anguish in public," he told *Radio 4's The World At One*.

One of the more surprising suggestions was a proposal from Dame Jill Knight, Tory MP for Edgbaston, that the Princess Royal might act as consort. Dame Jill said: "I would very much like to see

Prince Charles come to the Throne with his sister, Princess Anne, as his consort."

Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, said: "I think it had become inevitable. The Prime Minister told the Queen he agreed with her judgment."

After a divorce, the Princess of Wales would almost certainly retain that title but it is unclear whether she would keep the prefix Her Royal Highness, said Charles Kidd, editor of Debut's Peerage.

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The Royal divorce: cost of settlement well beyond resources of the Duchy of Cornwall

Queen may have to fund divorce pay-off that will run into millions

By ALAN HAMILTON

THE Queen may have to dig deep into her private resources to pay off the Princess of Wales if she demands a lump sum as a divorce settlement.

Even the substantial income drawn by the Prince of Wales from the Duchy of Cornwall estates would not be enough in any one year to fund a settlement — likely to run into millions — to keep the Princess in the manner to which she has become accustomed.

Last year the Prince received £4.5 million before tax from the Duchy. His income funds the salaries and offices of staff employed by both the Prince and Princess and pays all the other expenses of their public lives. The balance is the Prince's personal income and, since 1993, he has voluntarily paid tax on it at the normal rates. Neither the Prince nor the Princess directly draws any taxpayers' money through the Civil List, although the Princess's home at Kensington Palace is publicly funded through annual grant-in-aid from the Department of National Heritage.

The Prince would not be allowed to sell off any of the duchy's 125,000 acres to finance a divorce. As Duke of Cornwall he runs the estates in effect as a trustee, entitled to their income but not their capital, which must be kept intact to provide an income for present and future dukes. He would therefore almost certainly have to look to his mother for help: the Queen provided a substantial part of the divorce settlements in the cases of both Princess Margaret and the Princess Royal.

Where the divorced Princess would live is a matter determined by security considerations as much as anything. Her strongest bargaining

counter is that she remains the mother of a future king, and as such is entitled to some degree of protection. Lawyers for both sides will discuss whether she can keep her present apartment at Kensington Palace, where she can live and entertain her children in safety. Recently, the Princess has caused a certain amount of alarm by occasionally turning up at public and private functions without her usual minders from the Metropolitan Police royal and diplomatic protection group.

Whether she retains an office and staff will depend on what sort of public role is eventually designed for her. At present she has one private secretary, Patrick Jephson, who is paid by the Duchy of

Cornwall. A future office would undoubtedly be moved from its present suite of rooms at St James's Palace, well away from "the enemy" — the Prince of Wales's staff — who share the building. Part of a divorce settlement may well be that the duchy continues to provide her with logistical support for a public life. The Duchess of York, on the other hand, now relies entirely on outsiders to help to run her admittedly modest diary of charity engagements.

The Princess's precise future role remains one of the major difficulties, determined as she is to maintain a high public profile and to have, if possible, government backing for it. Her wish, expressed in her *Panorama* interview, to be an "ambassador for Britain" has led to a great deal of ill-directed speculation that she might wish for, or be given, some kind of diplomatic function.

The suggestion is preposterous. Diplomacy is an art to be learnt and is the province of professionals. The Princess has on the odd occasion tried her hand at it, but without noticeable success. On a visit to Nepal to see how British aid money was being spent, she merely diverted attention from the professional who accompanied her, Baroness Chalker of Wallasey, the minister responsible for the aid programme.

More recently, the Princess found herself in Argentina, supposedly as the guest of a local medical charity, to look at seven hospitals and clinics in three days, but in truth a guest of the Argentine Government and President Carlos Menem, who frequently attempts to bolster his popularity with the electorate by being

seen and photographed with classy, famous women.

The finer points of the eventual sovereignty of the Falkland Islands are waters far too deep for the Princess to tread. British diplomats in Buenos Aires breathed a sigh of relief at her departure: they judged the visit a success, but only because nothing had gone terribly wrong.

The Princess has had several meetings with John Major, most recently on

Wednesday, to discuss what her future role might be. The Prime Minister is known to be sympathetic to her wish for a visible and definable job, but knows that she cannot act in any way as a British government representative. Even in a less formal ambassadorial role, a divorced princess would be a devalued currency. No longer the wife of the heir to the throne and the next queen consort, her only claim to fame would be fame itself.

Her role model must be the Princess Royal, the Stakhanovite of the Royal Family with more than 400 public engagements to her credit last year. She has earned immense respect from the public and from professionals in the field for her high-profile and tirelessly active presidency of the Save The Children Fund, an active good cause with few political ties.

Work, the Princess Royal has discovered, is the saviour

of many things. The Princess of Wales at one stage looked like assuming a similar role with the Red Cross, but little has so far come of it. She will find that, if she wishes to be appointed to a labour of love, she will be unable to take the labour lightly.

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The Princess of Wales, dancing with the Prince in Australia in 1985, is now looking for a role of her own

Church gives its blessing to Prince

By RUTH GLEDHILL
RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

CHURCH leaders last night welcomed the Prince of Wales's statement that he did not intend to remarry and emphasised that there would be no constitutional problems over a divorce.

The Right Rev Nigel McCulloch, Bishop of Wakefield and chairman of the Church of England communications committee, said: "When there is so much speculation about constitutional issues, it is very important to recognise that we are dealing with a family, a husband and wife who are a mum and dad with two boys."

"We must remember that divorce is always a painful procedure, however amicable it might be. It is often the children who are most hurt by it." Speculation about a future remarriage by the Prince had been ended by his statement.

"If the Prince of Wales does become divorced, that is no bar to his being supreme governor of the Church of England."

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, who agreed with the decision to send the letters, did not wish to comment yesterday.

The Ven George Austin, Archdeacon of York and a leading church conservative, said: "The Church doesn't like divorce. It recognises the pain divorce causes. But it's remarriage that's the problem."

Archdeacon Austin said that the sooner the couple divorced the better. "For the monarchy it could be a fresh start. It was quite clear that, as far as the Queen was concerned, enough was enough. It was a very bold step for the Queen to come in like this and bang their heads together and say, 'Let's sort this out'."

He said that the Princess of Wales risked losing public support if she stood in the way of divorce. "If she's obstinate, she damages her own position. It's not a good move for her if she starts objecting and whingeing about the settlement."

Parker Bowles family circle remains tight-lipped

Discreet lady in waiting keeps herself busy moving house

By EMMA WILKINS

CAMILLA Parker Bowles is one of a dwindling band of the Prince of Wales's circle to retain a dignified silence throughout the turmoil of his disintegrating marriage.

In spite of her long-standing affair with the Prince, Mrs Parker Bowles has never suggested that she would one day hope to become his Queen. It was only with the greatest sadness that she agreed to a divorce from her husband, Andrew, with whom she has two children, Tom, 21, and Laura, 17.

Mrs Parker Bowles's family was continuing the policy of discretion yesterday, following the Prince's announcement that he had no intention of re-marrying. Simon Elliot, her brother-in-law, said: "There's never been, from any side of the immediate family, any statements over anything. We will continue to hold that view. We've strongly wanted to maintain our own privacy, as has my sister-in-law."

Mrs Parker Bowles, who is staying with friends before moving into her new home near Lacock, Wiltshire, began her 25-year relationship with the Prince when they met at a polo match at Windsor in 1970. There was speculation at the time that they might marry, but three years later she became engaged to Andrew Parker Bowles, an army officer, while the Prince was serving with the Royal Navy at sea.

The pair's most recent public appearance together — at a society party at the Ritz hotel, Piccadilly, in October — was interpreted as a signal of the Prince's intention to continue his affair, in spite of adverse public opinion.

Mrs Parker Bowles, 48, has proved a loyal member of the Royal Family's circle of friends — enjoying privileged access to the royal box at Ascot and other society functions. Her wedding was attended by Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, and the then Princess Anne — friends

of the Parker Bowles family. Her late mother, Rosalind Shand, was a cousin of Lord Ashcombe, head of the Cubitt dynasty which made a great fortune by building London's Belgravia.

The couple's first conversation is said to have begun when the then Camilla Shand reminded the Prince that her great-grandmother, Alice Keppel, was the mistress of Edward VII — the Prince's great-great grandfather. "So how about it...?" she is said to have remarked.

The Prince's interview with Jonathan Dimbleby, in which

he admitted to an affair with Mrs Parker Bowles before and during his marriage, came as a shock to his estranged wife. She was later to return the favour by admitting to an affair with James Hewitt, a former army officer, in last month's BBC *Panorama* interview.

The Princess also took the opportunity to disclose on television that she was aware of her husband's infidelity with Mrs Parker Bowles. "There were three of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded," she said.

It was Mrs Parker Bowles

who suggested Lady Diana Spencer as a suitable bride for the Prince in 1980. It has also been suggested that Ruth, Lady Fermoy, Diana's grandmother and a lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, put her name forward.

When the Prince proposed to Lady Diana Spencer in March 1981, he chose the garden at Bolckland Manor — then the Parker Bowles's home in Wiltshire — as the perfect setting to ask for her hand in marriage.

The first suggestions of an affair between the Prince and Mrs Parker Bowles came long before the royal couple chose to broadcast their own versions of the relationship. The publication of the intimate and scatological "Camillagate" tape in 1992 seemed to leave little doubt that the relationship was intense.

After the publication of Andrew Morton's book *Diana: Her True Story*, Brigadier Parker Bowles made a rare comment denying that his wife was the "other woman" in the Prince's life. "It's fiction, fiction," he said bitterly.

The Queen's reaction to the revelations in the Morton book was to show her public support for Mrs Parker Bowles by taking tea with her at a Windsor polo match just months after the book's publication.

Just a month after the official separation of the Prince and Princess of Wales was announced in December 1992, Mrs Parker Bowles was separated from her husband — remaining at the marital home at Corsham, Wiltshire.

After the announcement of her divorce in January this year, Mrs Parker Bowles has attempted to avoid the limelight. While the Prince and his estranged wife have been busy fighting their public battles, Mrs Parker Bowles has been more occupied with moving to her new home — a 17-acre estate on the banks of the Avon.



Camilla Parker Bowles, whose unwavering loyalty to the Royal Family has been rewarded with privileges

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Surgeon cleared over abortion during operation

BY EMMA WILKINS

Mr Dixon, 59, said after the verdict: "It is a great relief to see the end of nearly three years of severe stress for me.

All female patients at King's Mill are now offered pregnancy tests before operations.



Dixon: hopes to return to gynaecology work

depression and had twice attempted suicide.

Although she told nurses that she had not had a period for three months, no tests were done to see if she was pregnant before she was wheeled into theatre. She was 11 weeks

Mr Dixon's defence was based on the 1967 Abortion Act, which allows surgeons to



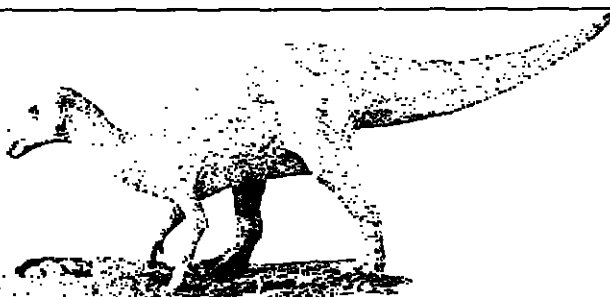
John Winch and his terrier Jake with the arm bone from an iguanodon, a four-ton dinosaur that ate plants and travelled in herds

Fossil hunter's dog digs up 4ft dinosaur bone

BY A STAFF REPORTER

Jake, a year-old Staffordshire bull terrier, was out with his master John Winch, 27, on a fossil-hunting trip on a beach on the island's southwest coast when the dog began scrabbling in the sand. "His activity drew my attention to it," said Mr Winch. "When we finally

The plant-eating iguanodon roamed savannahs and marshy deltas in herds, feeding on horsetails and ferns. Adult iguanodon normally grew to about 25ft and weighed up to four tons.



Tabloids to contest contempt ruling

BY ALEXANDRA FREAN

FIVE tabloid newspapers yesterday pledged to contest a contempt action brought against them by the Attorney General. Sir Nicholas Lyell, over coverage of Geoffrey Knights, the boyfriend of the *EastEnders* actress Gillian Taylforth.

Sir Nicholas yesterday won leave in the High Court to bring contempt of court proceedings against the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Star*, *The Sun* and the now defunct *Today* for allegedly

prejudicial coverage of Mr Knights in run-up to his trial on a charge of wounding a

cab driver. The trial was halted in October because of what the judge called "unlawful, misleading and scandalous" pre-trial press coverage of Mr Knights.

If found guilty, the five titles could face unlimited fines, and the individual editors a maximum of two years in prison.

Daniel Taylor, solicitor for *The Sun* and the defunct *Today*, said he would mount a vigorous defence to the proceedings. Express Newspapers, publisher of the *Daily Star*, and the *Daily Mail* confirmed they would contest the action. The *Daily Mirror* would not comment further.

Teenager given six years for attack on DPP's husband

BY KATHRYN KNIGHT

ONE of the teenagers who attacked John Mills, the husband of the Director of Public Prosecutions, was yesterday given six years' youth custody. Bernard Enorio, then 17, was one of six youths who attacked Mr Mills, 57, a busi-

nessman, near his Camden home in May, leaving him bleeding profusely from a near-fatal stab wound to his abdomen. A wallet containing £100 in cash and credit cards was snatched from the wounded Mr Mills.

Enerio had supplied the 5 in martial arts knife used in the

attack after he punched Mr Mills on the head. Inner London Crown Court was told. He was the only member of the gang to be caught. Sentencing him, Judge Prendergast told him that although he had not wielded the knife, the "skilful teamwork" meant he was responsible.

The judge said: "Gangs of teenagers armed with knives roaming the streets intent on robbery will be punished by the courts. This robbery and its circumstances are of such gravity that a sentence of general deterrence is necessary."

Eneria, 18 today, was cleared earlier this month of

wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm but convicted of wounding and robbery. He had admitted possessing the knife and yesterday asked for an offence of causing £500 criminal damage to a car's tyres to be taken into consideration.

Ross Taylor, for the defence, said Enerio had run away from home and fallen in with bad company. Enerio named the other alleged gang members but it is not clear whether action will be taken.

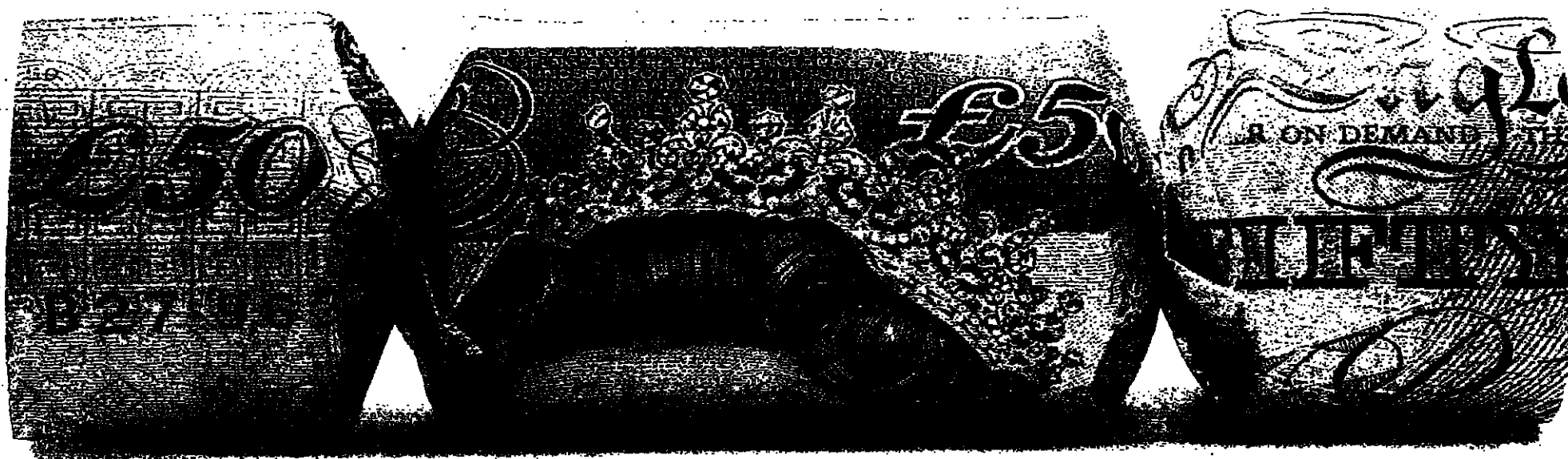
The judge awarded a 16-year-old female witness £400 for her helping to bring Enerio to justice.

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The Times said depriving motorists of the 'hazards of driving at speed' could make them drowsy

Thirty years since Britain slammed on the brakes

By PETER FOSTER

SPORTS CAR manufacturers said it could ruin them: the AA and the RAC publicly condemned it, and The Times speculated that Britain would fall asleep at the wheel because of it. Thirty years ago today, the 70mph speed limit was introduced.

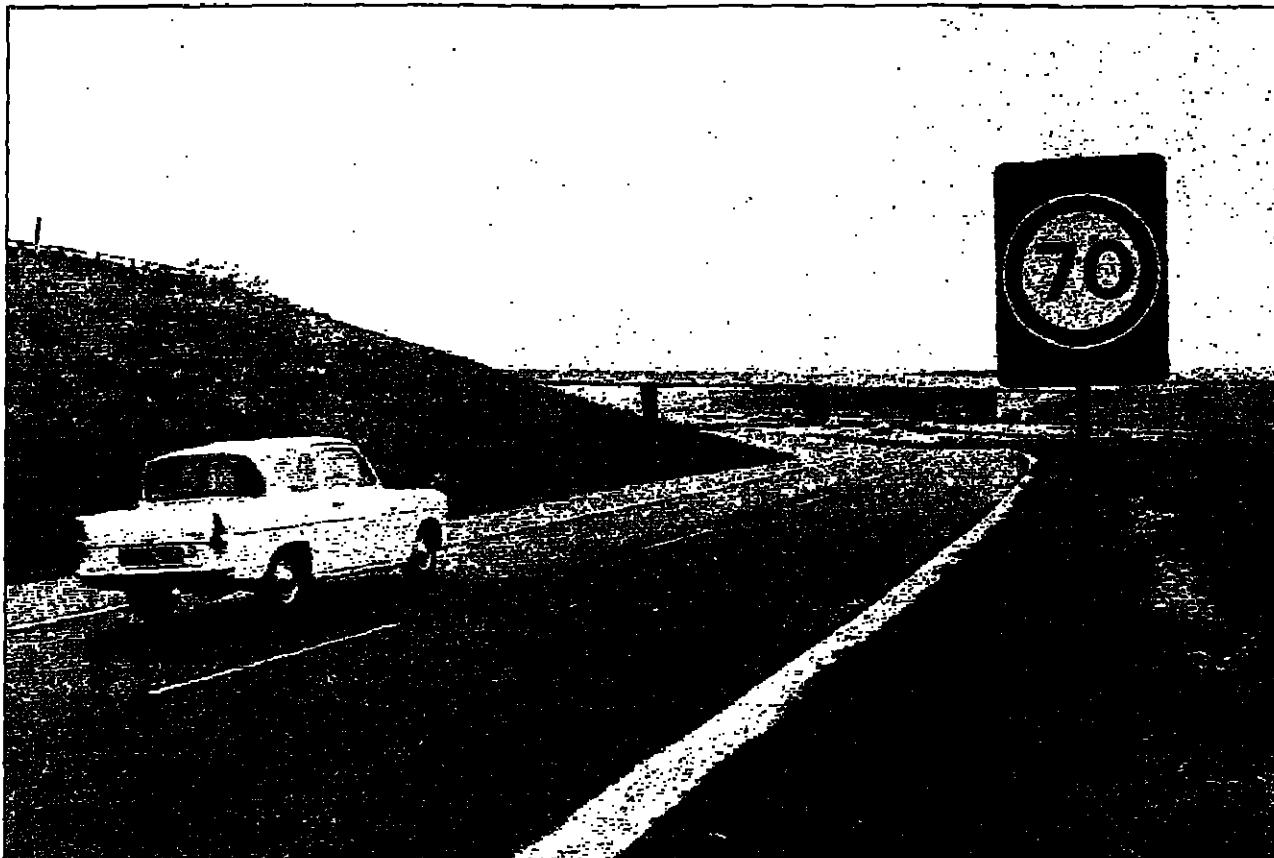
Tom Fraser, Labour's Transport Minister, blamed an "irresponsible minority" of drivers for forcing the restriction on the Government. The limit, introduced on a four-month trial basis, was greeted with anger and scepticism.

A protest group called Motorists' Action was formed and 450 members, driving E-Type Jaguars, MGs and Mini Coopers, staged a rally at an M1 service station. Graham Arnold, Lotus's sales manager and their leader, voiced his opposition from his open-topped car and vowed to sign up 100,000 members.

Even in 1965, most cars could break the new limit. The E-Type could hit 155mph and the Aston Martin DB5 143mph. At the other end of the scale was the 83mph Ford Cortina Super and the Morris Minor 1000 De Luxe, top speed 71mph.

A leading article in The Times of December 4 1965 said that the limit could well cost lives instead of saving them. Depriving motorists of the "ever present hazards of driving at speed" could make road users drowsy and inattentive.

From the AA's spotter plane



Motorways were quieter and traffic lighter when the 70mph limit was forced on a sceptical motoring public by what the Government called an "irresponsible minority"

above the M1, The Times's motoring correspondent reported that the majority of motorists appeared to be obeying the new law. A notable exception was a blue Aston Martin DB5 that passed beneath the plane at an estimated 110mph, still accelerating.

The 70mph limit came into force indefinitely on January 1 1967, but the debate over speed limits continued. During the 1973-74 oil crisis, a temporary 50mph maximum was imposed to save energy.

The 70mph limit was reinstated after pressure from motoring organisations, despite a Department of the

Environment report that showed a 62 per cent drop in motorway casualties. David Field, a News of the World columnist, wrote: "It is a cruel and arrogant country that can find it necessary to introduce a 50mph limit to save petrol but not to save lives."

The past 30 years have seen

several eminent public figures fall foul of the 70mph limit. Prince Michael of Kent was banned from driving for two weeks after being clocked at 103mph on the M4 in his Aston Martin Volante. He was President of the RAC motor sports council at the time.

Other celebrities caught

breaking the law include the former Beatle George Harrison, Roger Taylor from the rock group Queen and Rowan Atkinson, the comedian.

Atkinson, after being convicted of speeding at 114mph on the M4, decided that the only way to avoid further temptation was to sell his

187mph Aston Martin Zagato.

The 70mph maximum remained unchanged until variable speed limits were introduced on the M25 earlier this year. Under the scheme, police can reduce speed limits when they see traffic becoming congested. In another initiative, main roads outside

some schools are to have temporary 30mph speed limits in the morning and evening to protect children.

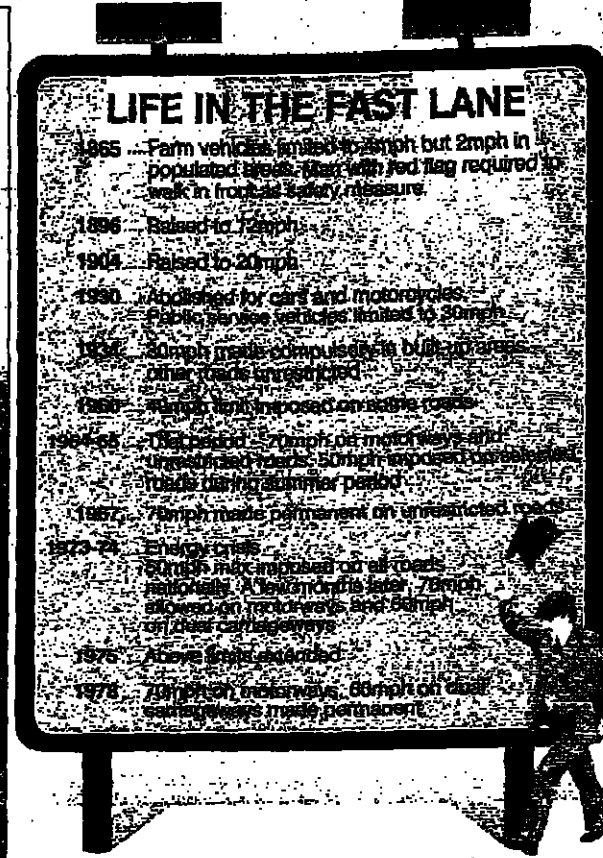
Andrew Howard, the AA's head of road safety, said that he welcomed such schemes. "Speed limits must be appropriate and realistic. People will go slowly if they know there is a good reason for the speed limit."

Earlier this month, America scrapped the national 55mph restriction imposed during the Seventies oil crisis. Rep. Nader, the veteran consumer campaigner, said of President Clinton's decision to agree to the move: "History will never forgive him and his allies in Congress for this assault on the sanctity of human life."

Police in Britain plan to make breaking the speed limit as much of a social stigma as drinking and driving. Chief Inspector Paul McElroy, of the National Police Traffic Committee, said: "We want to get speeding recognised as anti-social behaviour. Speed limits must be realistic but once they are in place the public must realise that they are there for a reason."

"Speed must be appropriate to conditions. Driving past a school at 20mph might be more reckless than driving on the motorway at 80mph."

Motorists of the future may have little or no choice about how fast they drive. Scientists are already experimenting with a roadside device that will regulate car speeds using a microwave transmitter.



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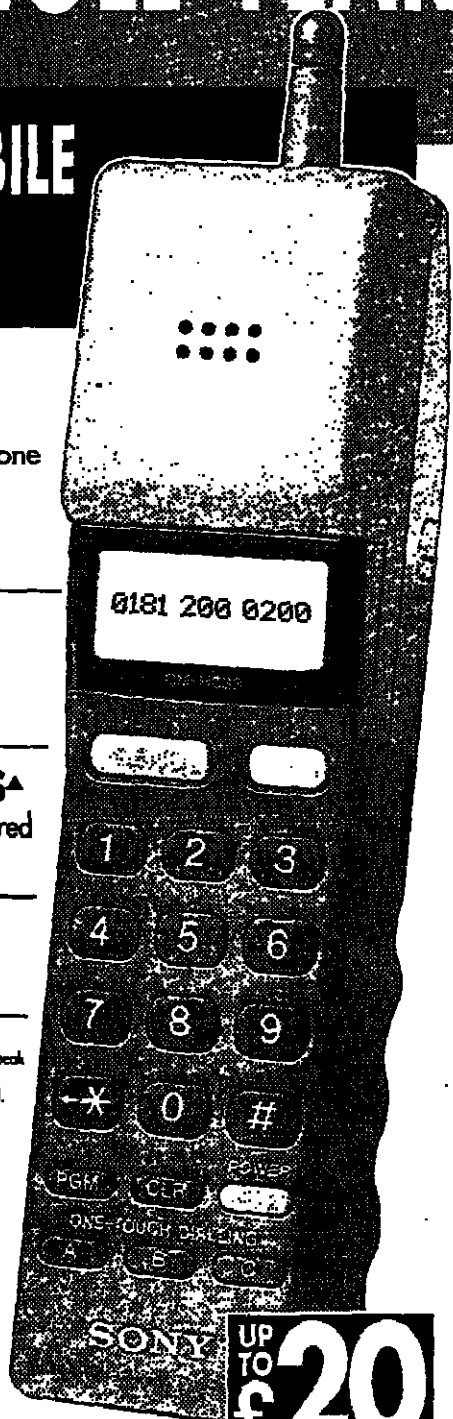
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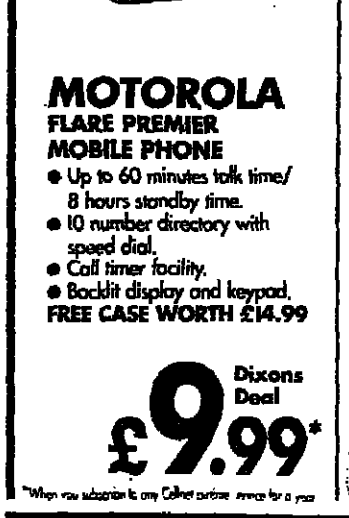
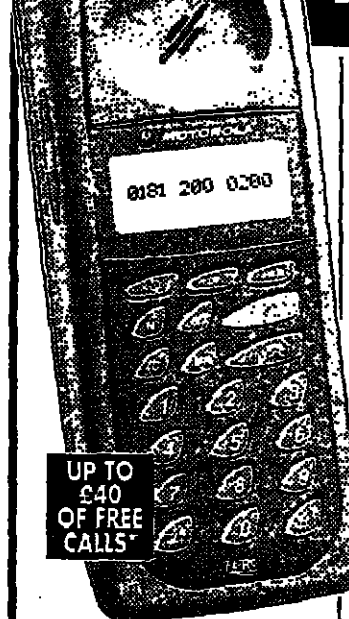
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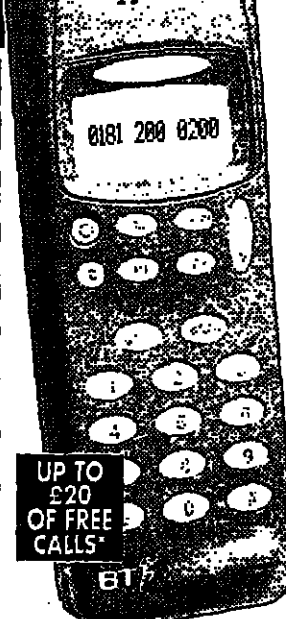


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Veteran fighter pilot flies in face of the law

A FORMER fighter pilot aged 75 was fined £300 but survived a call for his car to be confiscated after being found guilty of driving while disqualified for the twenty-fourth time.

Angus "Biggles" Black, who has been banned for life eight times, says his addiction to speed stems from his days as an RAF fighter pilot in the Fifties. His activities have infuriated police and magistrates in his home town of Carlisle, Cumbria. He was once clocked driving at 160mph.

This week magistrates banned Black again but turned down a prosecution plea to confiscate his 1.6 litre Rover. He had owned the car for barely a week before police recognised who was at the wheel. Black admitted driving while disqualified, having no insurance and obtaining an insurance policy by deception.

He speaks nostalgically of his days flying RAF fighter jets. His home is filled with air force mementoes, including a plaque with the inscription: "Through the clouds we fly."

He said: "I was used to doing speeds of 300 to 400mph and driving a car is like flying. You don't realise you are going so fast. It was a great life and if I had my youth I'd sign up again."

He added that he never



Black: banned for life eight times

thought about the danger his driving posed to other motorists.

Chief Inspector John Lynch, head of Cumbria Traffic Police, said: "Eventually he will have an accident, someone will get hurt and it will be that person who suffers. He seems to have no regard for the law of the land or his fellow road users."

Police impounded Black's new car after his arrest on Monday, but they have had to hand it back.

Yesterday, Black declined to disclose whether or not he intended to take to the road again and risk a jail sentence: "I have nothing else to say on the subject."

Breakfast show DJ misses out on the morning after

By ALEXANDRA FREAN

IF YOU woke up too late for Chris Evans's breakfast show on Radio One yesterday after a night of strenuous office partying, you weren't the only one: Evans missed it too. The disc jockey failed to turn up to present the programme after his own office bash.

Radio One said on air that their star presenter was "unwell due to a throat infection". However, Evans's stand-in, Dave Pearce, told listeners that that sounded like a "load of pokies".

A spokesman for Evans later admitted that he was nursing a very bad hangover. "He drank copious quantities of almost anything — beer, champagne, brandy. It's probably just as well he didn't turn up because his show would have been pretty appalling, given the state he was in."

Evans, who had boasted on his show the previous day that he intended to drink heavily at the party, issued a brief statement from his home in Hampstead, north London: "I am very unwell." A Radio One spokeswoman said that he could expect a stern reprimand from Matthew Bannister, the station's controller. "He will not be disciplined."

but I am sure he will get a ticking off," she said.

Evans is Radio One's highest-paid presenter and his company, Ginger Productions, has a contract — believed to be worth £750,000 to £1 million — to produce the programme for the station until the end of next year.

The spokesman for Evans said that after his show on Wednesday, the disc jockey went to buy Christmas presents for his production team. When he returned, they all went for lunch at the Park Lane Hilton. They then went drinking at The Groucho Club in Soho, one of Evans's favourite watering holes.

Evans was not heard from again until 6am, 20 minutes before he was due to go on air, when he telephoned the station's duty officer to say he had a throat infection and would not be coming in.

Although Radio One was at pains to point out the humorous side of the affair yesterday, it conceded that Evans had not set a very good example to the station's young audience. Earlier this year Radio One ran a social action campaign to raise awareness about alcohol abuse.

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be similar.

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Hitman who shot wrong sister 'was mafia agent'

By Bill Frost

AN ASSASSIN who shot dead a British geophysicist in what is thought to have been a case of mistaken identity, may well have been in the pay of the Russian mafia, police believe.

Karen Reed was shot three times after answering her front door to the killer, who posed as a pizza delivery man. She was probably mistaken for her sister Alison Ponting, the intended victim in a blood feud after her Armenian husband was convicted of murdering two brothers who set up an embassy in Britain for the breakaway Chechen Republic in 1993.

Detective Superintendent John Stewardson, who led the investigation, said after the inquest at Chertsey, Surrey, that business deals involving Miss Ponting's husband in Chechnya might have had an influence. The killing might also have been revenge for the other murders.

Miss Reed, 33, was killed on April 30 last year, after her friend Ann Smith went to her home in Woking, Surrey. The pair had settled down with a bottle of wine when there was a knock at the front door at about 9.15pm.

Ms Smith said in a statement: "Karen opened the door partly. She stood on the open side of the door and I was standing at the bottom of the stairs. I could see the figure was a man. He was holding a small blue and white pizza box and he said 'Have you ordered a pizza?'"

Ms Smith said Miss Reed replied that she had not ordered anything and turned to ask her if she had. The man then confirmed the address. "The next thing I heard was three loud bangs in quick succession. I realised it was a gun. I ran upstairs because I knew there was a panic alarm in the house because of the

situation with Karen's sister." Ms Smith said she found Miss Reed on her back by the front door. She dialled 999 but by the time an ambulance arrived her friend was dead.

Miss Ponting, 31, told police she was convinced the gunman had meant to kill her because of her husband's conviction. "The only reason I believe she was killed was that someone thought she was me."

Two weeks before the shooting, police had chased a car in the Woking area, the inquest was told. The driver leapt from the moving car and disappeared in woodland. An automatic pistol with a silencer was found in a holdall beneath the passenger seat. Bullets in the magazine had been hollowed out and filled with mercury. A commando knife was also recovered.

Michael Burgess, the Surrey Coroner, who recorded a verdict of unlawful killing on Miss Reed, said: "We don't really know why she died, but the prospect is raised that she was mistaken for her sister and that someone was trying to square some sort of deal."

Scotland Yard's specialist operations branch has been given the task of monitoring and curbing the growth of Russian mafia influence in Britain's criminal underworld. The Chechens are known to be at the heart of many of the racketeers the Russians have tried to organise in this country.

Police have uncovered Russian prostitution rings in London and Northampton and there are strong indications that Russian gangsters are closely involved in importing large amounts of heroin from Asia.

Project Ivan — an investigation by the National Criminal Intelligence Service — has also found that the Russian mafia is preparing to move in on counterfeiting and the illegal arms trade in this country.



Police search for clues the day after the assassin struck

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Robin Young fills his trolley with a tempting selection of seasonal delights



More than 90 per cent of British households will buy turkey this year — but goose, a lot more expensive per pound, will be a luxurious alternative on many tables

Sunday opening offers last chance to stock up with Christmas fare

WEEKEND SHOPPING

LAST-minute shoppers will be able to take advantage of Sunday trading as supermarkets and major supermarkets open on Christmas Eve.

Ninety per cent of households purchase a Christmas turkey, and with frozen birds at 29p a lb and cheaper than petfood, the percentage is not surprising. Three million fresh turkeys will be sold too, starting at 99p a lb.

The most popular alternatives to turkey are geese, duck, and beef, pork or gammon roasts. Somerfield has fresh geese at £2.39 a lb and Co-op stores 1.8 kg ducklings at £4.79.

Most stores are offering discounts on smoked salmon. Safeway has cut its 450g pack by £5 to £5.99. Fish is a popular choice for lighter meals over Christmas and there are good offers on whole salmon. Other prime species are in demand and prices have risen. Halibut are likely to cost over £7 a lb,

turbot £5.50, sea bass £6 and Dover sole about £5.50.

Seasonal foods come gift-wrapped and ready to serve, suitable as last-minute presents and stocking-fillers as well as pantry standbys. Vegetarians are catered for with packet luxury nut roasts available with sachets of sauces and soups and side-dishes.

Mince pies come in huge variety: short crust or puff-pastry, lattice-topped or filo-topped, deep-filled, luxury buttercrust or connoisseur class, mini-sized or extra large. Each store will have just as many varieties of Christmas pudding and a choice of alcoholic butters, sauces and creams to pour over both. Safeway, for example, offers 13 different puddings this year.

Confectionery novelties range from edible editions of

Scrabble and Trivial Pursuit, selling at £5.50 a box at Marks & Spencer, to Christmas-tree biscuits at Asda and a Father Christmas cake designed by Jane Asher at Sainsbury's (£6.99).

On the vegetable counters, parsnips, carrots and onions for roasting are in good supply but potatoes are substantially more expensive than last year. Alternatives to brighten the plate include pumpkins, squashes and peppers. Brussels sprouts are smaller this year and earlier mild weather has made cauliflower expensive: class II heads have risen to 89p each.

Promotions include: Asda: fresh turkey crowns £3.85 a kg, fresh beef topside with basting fat £4.38 a kg, pork whole leg £2.18 a kg, sprouts 69p a lb, parsnips 45p a lb, farmstore potatoes £1.69 for 7.5 kg.

Budgets: topside/silver-side/top rump beef £5.69 a kg, Scottish smoked salmon £6.99 for 400g, fresh peeled prawns £2.49 for 200g, pork pie 79p for 295g, mince pies 99p for 12, double cream £1.37 for 568ml, clementines £1.19 a kg, blue stilton £2.49 a lb.

Co-op: fresh whole duckling 1.8 kg £4.79, extra large whole chicken 2.6 kg £5.79, whole Scottish salmon £5.49 a kg, blue stilton £4.79 a kg, deep-filled mince pies £1.39 for 12, fresh double cream 59p for 284ml, eight-year-old malt whisky £9.69 for 70cl.

Harrods: Crottin de Chavignol cheeses £1.93 each, Roquefort £21.29 kg, spiced beef £1.95 for 100g, Royal game pie £1.80 for 100g. Iceland: honey-roast ham joint £7.99 for 900g, Cherry Valley duckling £5.99 for 2.6 kg, A-grade chickens 2.6 to 3 kg £3.99, New York strawberry cheesecake £1.99 for 5-6 portions, tiramisu £1.99 for 6-8 portions.

Marks & Spencer: Scottish smoked salmon £6.99 for 300g, peeled king prawns £2.99 for 170g, prepared unsmoked gammon honey joint £3.99 for 510g, apricots £1.99 for six, clementines £1.99 for 1.7 kg.

Morrisons: whole salmon £4.16 a kg, salmon fillet £6.15 a kg, whole side of smoked salmon £6.49, gravadlax £1.99 for 120g, Cornish peeled king prawns £2.99 for 135g, super roaster chickens £2.99 each.

Safeway: Scottish smoked salmon £5.99 for 450g, whole salmon £4.99 a kg, frozen prawns £3.69 for 440g, topside/silver-side/top rump £4.39 a kg, boneless leg of pork £3.19 a kg, fresh turkey with giblets £2.18 a kg, milk chocolate yule log £1.49, blue stilton £2.59 a lb, fully matured cheddar £2.49 a lb.

Sainsbury's: fresh turkeys 2-4.4 kg £2.18 a kg, fresh beef topside £5.49 a kg, fresh stocks and sauces 75p for 142g, traditional gammon joints 99p a kg, turkey and cranberry pie 59p for 100g, luxury mince pie 99p for 41g, rich fruit pudding £1.99 for 454g.

Somerfield: fresh whole goose £2.39 a lb, whole ducks £1.25 a lb, whole turkeys with giblets £1.09 a lb, ham on the bone 49p a lb, asparagus £1.99 for 250g, salad potatoes 79p for 500g, clementines £1.39 for 1.5 kg, frozen straw-

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berry gateau 99p for 388g. Tesco: Scottish rump steak £9.48 a kg, boneless leg of pork £2.84 a kg, whole chicken £1.89 kg, roast ham 99p for 113g, whole salmon £1.87 a lb, whole prawns 59p ¼ lb, new potatoes 59p for 800g, Cox apples 40p a lb, clementines 59p a lb. Waitrose: whole Scottish salmon under 8 lb £2.19 a lb or 8 to 10 lb £2.99 a lb, salmon steaks £2.99 a lb, cooked and peeled prawns £4.49 a lb, smoked salmon slices £3.99 for 180g, Scotch roasting beef £2.49 a lb, Aberdeen Angus roasting beef £2.99 a lb, mature blue stilton £5.23 a kg, dairy vanilla ice cream £2.19 for 2ltr, mince pies 69p for six, pure orange juice £1.59 for 2ltr.

Raise a glass to festive wines at a bargain price

Jane MacQuitty, *The Times* wine correspondent, chooses her best buys for Christmas:

Best cheap white: Bulgarian Country White Wine, Slavtitz, Tesco £1.99. Ripe, raisiny, rose-scented fruit. A rock-bottom-priced festive white with wide appeal.

Best cheap red: Bulgarian Country Red Wine, Pomorie, Tesco £1.99. Big, chunky blackcurrant style makes a fine, inexpensive red.

Everyday Christmas red: 1994 Pinot Noir Vin de Pays de l'Aude, Louis Page, Majestic Wine Warehouse £2.99. Pleasant, ripe, plummy, with classy burgundian flavours.

Everyday Christmas white: 1994 Domaine Boyar Torgovschite region Chardonnay, Bulgaria, Thresher, Wine Rack and Bottoms Up £2.99. Light fresh apple Chardonnay fruit at a rock-bottom price.

Finer festive white: 1994 Kirkwood Chardonnay Moldavian wine, Somerfield, Gateway, Thresher, Wine Rack and Bottoms Up, £3.29. Full ripe, nutty, Chardonnay with creamy, hazelnut finesse



at a keen price.

Finer festive red: 1994 Kirkwood Cabernet Merlot, Moldavian wine, Thresher, Wine Rack and Bottoms Up £3.29. Safeway £3.39. Less distinguished than its white sister, but still heaped high with firm, herbaceous fruit.

Unusual festive white: 1994 Deer Leap Gewurztraminer, Hungary, Waitrose £3.49. Splendid Alsace taste-alike with rich, rose, violet and lychee-like fruit.

Unusual festive red: 1994 Baso Navarra Garnacho. Full of delicious ripe, spicy, plummy fruit. Thresher, Wine Rack and Bottoms Up, £3.29. Full ripe, nutty, Chardonnay with creamy, hazelnut finesse

Superior old-world house white: 1995 Villa Maria Pri-

vate Bin Sauvignon Blanc, New Zealand, Majestic and Oddbins £5.49. Waitrose, Sainsbury's, Thresher, Wine Rack and Bottoms Up £5.99. A classic new-world style, full of mouth-watering gooseberry-scented fruit.

Superior old-world house white: 1994 Regnie, Georges Dubouef, Safeway £5.99, Morrisons £5.55. A good French foil to the New Zealand Sauvignon, full of juicy red fruits-flavour.

Superior new-world house white: 1992 Ironstone Cabernet Shiraz, Western Australia, Fullers, Tesco £5.99, Majestic £5.99. Big, beefy, pepper and cassia Australian flavours.

Superior new-world house red: 1994 Ironstone Semillon Chardonnay, Majestic £5.39. Fullers and Tesco £5.99. Delicious, buttery, pineapple new-world white with elegance and charm.

Festive fizz: Bouvet Ladubay Saumur Brut, Majestic £7.99, or £6.39 a bottle if bought by the case. This season's best fizz is from France and delivers lots of delicious, waxy, lemony fruit.

That special treat could be just a phone call away

Some specialist producers and stockists of fine foods still have supplies available, or are willing to accept telephone orders for prompt collection. Leyla Linton and Tara Hyland compile a selection

□ Kelly Turkey Farms, Bicknacre Road, Danbury near Chelmsford, Essex: 01245-223381. You can call today and arrange an overnight delivery or a collection on Saturday or Sunday. If you collect, free-range bronze turkeys cost from £4.61 a kg for birds weighing eight kilos or more to £6.01 a kg for birds weighing three to four kilos.

□ Ashwell Delicatessen, Farrowby Farm, Hinxworth, Hertfordshire: 01462-733700. Their farm shop, with a variety of produce, is open today, Saturday and Sunday, 9am-6pm. Ring first to see if they still have broad-breasted free-range turkeys at £2.25 a lb. There should be plenty of oak-smoked ham from free-range pigs at £5 a lb, as well as bacon and sausages. Also ribs of Derbyshire beef, organically farmed venison, and free-range chickens.

□ George Scott Butchers, 81, Low Petergate, York: 01904-622972. Grade A fresh turkeys available at £1.45 a lb; honey roast ham at £4.16 a lb. The shop is open 7am-6pm today, Saturday and Sunday.

□ Seldom Seen Farm, Billesdon, Leicestershire: 01162-596742. Open today and Saturday 9.30am-5pm; Sunday, 9.30am-noon. No turkeys left but still have home-made Christmas puddings, various cakes, cheese scones. Also smoked salmon, Trelough duck from the Hereford Duck Company, pheasant, wild duck. No orders.

□ Chatsworth Farm Shop, Bakewell, Derbyshire: 01246-583392. Open today 9am-5pm and Saturday 8am-6pm; closed Sunday. Order by telephone for collection. Hampers can still be made in the shop, priced £19-£200. Fresh and frozen game, turkeys, hams, smoked salmon, trout, cheeses, cakes and puddings.

□ Eastbrook Farm, Shrotonham, Oxfordshire: 01793-782211. Organic poultry, veal and pork. No more orders, but the shop is open today 8am-5.30pm and Saturday 8am-4pm.

□ Homewood Partners, Peach Croft Farm, Radley, Abingdon, Oxfordshire. For this Christmas, they have sold out of free-range turkeys, free-range geese and barn-reared turkeys. For next year, write in and they will put you on the mailing list.

□ Weald Smokery, Mount Farm, Flimwell, Sussex: 01580-879601. Open today and Saturday 9am-5.30pm. Smoked salmon, duck and venison. Gravolax at £13.95 a lb sliced or £10 whole. Callers only.

□ Blackmoor Nurseries and Apple Shop, Liss, Hampshire: 01420-473782. Apples are the speciality, but they also have cheeses, home-baked cakes and pies. Orders, for collection only, taken till noon today, shop open 9am-5pm today, Saturday and Sunday 10am-4pm.

□ Chivers Farm Shop, Impington, Cambridgeshire: 01223-237799. Their own apples gift-wrapped at £3.85 for a 6½ to 7lb box supplemented by cakes and pies made locally. Christmas cakes £11.50 or £13.75. Christmas puddings £4.65 a

Polish Premier is accused of spying for Moscow

FROM ROGER BOYES IN WARSAW

JOZEF OLESKY, the Polish Prime Minister, was yesterday fighting for his political life after his Interior Minister accused him of supplying classified documents to the Russian secret service.

The charges, which are backed by Lesz Walesa, the outgoing President, have plunged Poland into a constitutional crisis and raised fears that Mr Walesa might declare a state of emergency.

The Prime Minister had "wittingly sent news and documents, including secrets" to foreign intelligence agents over the past five years, Andrzej Milczanowski told parliament to shouts of protest from former Communist deputies. From the evidence leaked yesterday, it is clear that the spy service involved is the KGB and its successor organisation.

Mr Olesky, a former Communist, jumped up and declared in a voice breaking with emotion: "I have never been an agent for anyone — it is Jozef Olesky who says this in front of you, in front of the parliament of the Polish republic."

He accused the Interior Minister, who was appointed by Mr Walesa, of falsifying the evidence against him. Today the military prosecutor will decide whether to take action against the Prime Minister, who could face the death sentence if convicted of spying.

The bitter infighting is overshadowing the inauguration this weekend of President

Kwasniewski who, like Mr Olesky, is a former senior member of the Communist Party. Mr Walesa, still in power until midnight today, will boycott the ceremony.

Earlier Mr Olesky appeared on television and accused "people from the Special Services," with the authority of Mr Milczanowski, of trying to destabilise the country before the handover of presidential power.

Some analysts believe that Mr Walesa was behind a plan to derail the inauguration, or at least to rob Mr Kwasniewski of any real influence as head of state. With a fellow former Communist as head of government, the new President could rapidly expand his power. Mr Walesa is trying to establish in the public mind a direct link between Polish Socialists and

the Russian Communists, who recently emerged as the strongest party in the Duma.

The evidence against Mr Olesky, judging by leaks yesterday, is rather thin. His file contains a photograph of him with the head of the Russian secret service in Warsaw. There is also a videotape of another meeting, transcripts of telephone conversations and statements from his bodyguards that Mr Olesky several times slipped their traces.

The Russian secret service insisted yesterday that the charges against the Prime Minister were "complete and utter nonsense". However, the KGB and its successor organisations have been active in Poland since the Second World War, particularly during martial law in the 1980s.

On the streets, Poles are nervously speaking of the prospect of martial law or a state of emergency. The President can make such declarations and Mr Walesa fuelled the speculation by talking of a "grave threat to state security" — the necessary precondition for imposing martial law. Mr Olesky replied that there was a security threat "but not from me, rather from those who cannot withdraw with dignity from the political scene".

This is in fact not Mr Walesa's political swansong, as he will be the leader of an anti-Communist opposition. Secret police files are sure to be the chief political issue as long as Mr Walesa sets the pace of Polish politics.



Olesky: an impassioned denial to parliament

Juppé gambles his future on attempt to revive economy

FROM ADAM SAGE IN PARIS

ALAIN JUPPÉ sought last night to revive the French economy and with it, his chances of remaining Prime Minister, as he opened a high-risk meeting in Paris.

At the start of the gathering of trade union leaders and the French equivalent of the Confederation of British Industry, he announced a series of measures designed to restore confidence after the public sector strike that rocked the country this month.

Under fire from trade unions, employers and even members of his right-wing majority party, M Juppé knew that the meeting represented a gamble that he had to win to stay in office. Failure to breathe new life into his beleaguered Government will almost certainly lead to his downfall in the New Year, according to sources in his Gaullist movement.

M Juppé called for "comprehension and reconciliation", then went on to outline policies that amount to a delicate balance between stimulating growth and avoiding weakening the drive to cut public sector deficits.

Help for the construction industry, a small reduction in Social Security contributions and encouragement for people to spend savings were the only concrete measures announced. However, M Juppé hopes that his calls for talks over a

reduction in working hours and youth employment will help to bring back the confidence that the French economy needs.

M Juppé said the Government, unions and industry, should solemnly commit themselves to finding jobs for 250,000 young people by the end of 1996.

Although President Chirac said during his election campaign that shortening the working week would have no effect on France's jobless total of almost three million, the Prime Minister now appears to believe otherwise.

Surrounded by almost half the Cabinet, M Juppé proposed three further meetings between the Government and the unions before next summer. Yesterday's meeting was a "point of departure", he said.

Promising a "moratorium" on new taxes after the beginning of next year, the Prime Minister added: "The objective remains, once the deficits have been brought down to the limits announced, to start a policy of progressively reducing fiscal pressure."

Meanwhile, however, M Juppé faces an army of critics, many of whom attended the meeting. Union leaders used the occasion to call for the scrapping of his welfare reform programme, which was at the centre of the recent strike.

Physicists derailed by the TGV

FROM PETER CAPELLA IN GENEVA

STRIKING French railway workers have inadvertently helped to advance the frontiers of science by uncovering a new role for the world's largest nuclear particle accelerator — as the world's most expensive railway timetable.

The cream of the global scientific community, at the European laboratory for particle physics, Cern, had been baffled for months by strange variations in the accelerator's magnetic field. The 17-mile long device runs in a circular tunnel straddling the French-Swiss border near Geneva.

Sensors installed in June showed disturbances three times a day; the changes, though small, were enough to force physicists to modify the margin of error. But when a lull occurred in the variations, coinciding with the French railway strike, a Swiss power worker with a gift for lateral thinking tracked down the problem to France's TGV high-speed train.

The TGV is thought to discharge up to a quarter of its current into the earth. Each time the Paris-Geneva express is in the Swiss city, the rogue discharge passes through the £660 million accelerator, according to Cern's physicists. Neil Calder, its spokesman, admitted there was little they could do, except to add an infinitesimal correction in their measurements each time the TGV is in the city.

Russians split over Yeltsin's reforms

FROM THOMAS DE WAAL IN MOSCOW

RESULTS from Sunday's election revealed a huge geographical and social gulf between Russia's big cities and the distant provinces yesterday as the Communist Party completed its sweep of seats in the Duma.

The party proved the winner in the last two of the 225 first-past-the-post seats to be counted. The latest gains ensured the Communists about 155 out of 450 seats in the Duma, or about three times as many as its nearest rival, Our Home is Russia. Only two other parties — the extreme right-wing Liberal Democratic Party of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and the liberal Yabloko of Grigori Yavlinsky — have passed the threshold of 5 per cent of the vote.

The results suggest economic reform has split the country four years after President Yeltsin started the programme.



A soldier inspects a 1996 calendar portraying Stalin in St Petersburg yesterday, the 116th anniversary of the dictator's birth

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Clinton 'dying' to give up Whitewater papers as Senate applies squeeze

FROM TOM RHODES
IN WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT Clinton, attempting to contain increasing political damage over Whitewater, yesterday rejected comparisons with Watergate, declared the \$25 million investigation into his affairs groundless, and said he was "dying" to submit subpoenaed documents about the failed Arkansas land venture to Congress.

The President's first public statement on Whitewater in months came after a special Senate committee voted 51-45 along party lines to sue the Administration for the

release of the documents and brought renewed echoes of the Nixon era to the Clinton re-election campaign next year.

"What was Watergate about? It was about abuse of the CIA, illegal wire taps, criminal conduct in the White House," said Mr Clinton in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*. "There has not been a single, solitary soul accuse me or my wife of doing anything illegal, not only in the White House, in the presidential campaign, or in the governor's office. Now, that is the difference."

So hard had it become for the President and his wife to put across

their side of the story that they sometimes relieved the frustration by laughing over Whitewater, Mr Clinton said. He also admitted that before the latest episode he would permit "no discussion of this in my household, no discussion of this in my office".

Describing Mrs Clinton as a strong character, the President said he was shocked that his wife had become the spotlight of the inquiry, despite the series of costly investigations which found "not a shred of evidence" against either of them.

"I wish everybody in this country had character as strong as hers and a sense of honesty and integrity as

deep as hers. We'd be in better shape," he said.

The strong defence of his wife, and rejection of continual Republican claims over Whitewater, suggest that pressure is building rapidly at the White House. Until recently, Mr Clinton was celebrating the successes of his foreign policy initiatives in Bosnia, Ireland and the Middle East and rejoicing in the embarrassment of a divided Republican Congress.

But the Senate committee, led by Alfonse D'Amato, became insistent when the White House refused to submit notes of a meeting in November 1993 between Mr Clin-

ton's lawyers and aides at which Whitewater was discussed.

In the interview, Mr Clinton said he had been advised by lawyers that he would infringe lawyer-client privilege for the first time in presidential history if he were to give up the documents.

"I'm dying to give these notes up. These people [lawyers] won't take 'yes' for an answer," he said. "I have asked them, 'can't I just go out here in the Rose Garden and call the press corps and just throw them out there? I have given 35,000 pages of documents up... By the way, none of it would do anything but exonerate me."

The White House was attempting yesterday to reach an agreement with Congress that would avoid a constitutional clash in the courts after an extraordinary Senate debate on executive integrity ended in a partisan challenge to the President. Even if a deal can be struck, the Clintons face continuing political embarrassment as they enter the 1996 campaign.

In the sharpest attack yet on Mrs Clinton, Lauch Faircloth, a North Carolina senator, accused the First Lady of lying to federal investigators about how her Arkansas law firm had represented Madison Guaranty, the collapsed savings

and loan organisation involved in the Whitewater venture. "Mrs Clinton made false statements to the Resolution Trust Corporation, a federal crime, about who brought Madison to the Rose firm," he said. "It is fast becoming clear that Mrs Clinton lied to federal investigators."

Another senator, said the President had no grounds to withhold memoranda from the White House meeting. "No President in history has ever claimed attorney-client privilege to defeat a congressional subpoena," he said. "Richard Nixon did not. Ronald Reagan did not during Iran Contra."

Rebel Class of '95 humbles Gingrich over budget deal

FROM MARTIN FLETCHER IN WASHINGTON

THE question that has puzzled Washington since the Republicans seized Congress last year has just been answered. Newt Gingrich does not control the Republicans' 73 ultra-conservative House freshmen. They control him.

Late on Wednesday the revolutionary Class of '95 humbled the cocky House Speaker by rejecting the agreement he and Robert Dole, the Senate leader, had just struck with President Clinton to resolve the budget crisis.

At a boisterous Capitol Hill rally they refused to reopen the federal Government, closed down since last Saturday, while their leaders and Mr Clinton sought to negotiate a seven-year plan to balance the budget.

They were unconcerned about doing the popular thing by just saying Christmas, or by Wall Street's 50-point slump in the 15 trading minutes left after their announcement. They knew their leverage over the President lay in keeping the Government closed, and they acted accordingly.

"This Government is going to remain shut down until he realises that we are not going to compromise on a balanced budget," Wisconsin's Mark Neumann said as congressional and White House aides struggled yesterday to find a new way forwards.

To be fair, most House Republicans endorsed that view, but it is unquestionably the freshmen who are driving the revolution and giving it

backbone. Veteran congressmen call them the "Hezbollah".

They are mostly young political neophytes elected on a radical anti-government platform and driven by an extraordinary sense of mission. They profess contempt for opinion polls and disinterest in re-election. Many have left their families in their districts to underscore their longing for the capital. A couple even sleep in their offices to make the point they see this as a strictly temporary assignment.

They are "the purest, most worthy group of leaders elected to this body in my lifetime", one of their spokesmen, Tennessee's Zach Wamp, claimed. They are also united like no other group on Capitol Hill, and in a House where the Republicans have a majority of just 37, that makes them

powerful. Mr Clinton professed anger after the freshmen snubbed the budget agreement, but in fact exploited the development for all its worth.

He suggested a bunch of Republican extremists were holding the nation hostage and that Mr Gingrich had lost control. He sought slyly to divide the Republican ranks by praising Mr Dole for his efforts to reopen the Government. However, the freshmen's rebellion also demonstrated how hard it will be to resolve this budget crisis.

Moderates could quickly agree to balance the budget by 2002 by drastically reducing the Republicans' proposed \$245 billion (£159 billion) in tax breaks, easing their deep cuts in popular social programmes, and using rosier economic forecasts. But the freshmen consider the tax cuts sacrosanct, are determined to curb the welfare state and would never accept fiscal fudges.

In a sense, their intransigence strengthens Mr Gingrich's negotiating hand even as they publicly embarrass him. As to who controls whom, the Speaker observed: "I'll let the historians figure that out."

Envoys rebuked: The Clinton Administration has reprimanded Daniel Spiegel, Ambassador to the European Office of the United Nations, who had called the Republican-led Congress isolationist. Republican leaders had demanded he be dismissed. (AP)



Gingrich controlled by young neophytes

Classics spurned by degrees

FROM TOM RHODES
IN WASHINGTON

GEORGETOWN University, President Clinton's alma mater in Washington, was facing criticism from students yesterday after the English faculty said it would grant a degree without so much as a cursory glance at the works of Shakespeare, Milton or Chaucer.

English students are presently obliged to study two of the classics, but a change in curriculum next year will mean *Hamlet*, *Paradise Lost* and *The Miller's Tale* are no longer required reading.

The new system, designed to

give undergraduates more flexibility in designing their degrees, will allow them to concentrate on one of three areas of study: literature and history, culture and performance, or writing.

The campus is in uproar, with more than a sixth of the course students arguing that it signals a move away from the traditional emphasis on authors from Britain.

Alexander Hertzberg, the 21-year-old editor of *The Georgetown Review*, a campus magazine, said: "It's OK to have a progressive literature department. But then people would have to graduate with a

degree in progressive literature and deal with the consequences of that."

Supporters of the change, who include three-quarters of the faculty, said the curriculum had not been altered in three decades while other universities had taken note of the times. The University of Maryland, on the outskirts of Washington, allowed English students to graduate without studying Shakespeare almost five years ago.

"We will still offer traditional courses and we expect the majority of students to stay within those," said Alwyn Cassil at Georgetown.



Hundreds of pine cones became "bricks" for Swiss florists when they had the idea of creating this Christmas ball sculpture, which has a diameter of nine feet and is now on display at a school playground in Berne

Journalists' toll tops 60 for year

Brussels: More than 60 journalists worldwide have been killed on assignment or because of their views so far this year, a report said yesterday.

The black spot was Algeria where 24 journalists were killed, the majority for their views on the continuing war between government forces and armed Islamic fundamentalists.

"What is certain beyond doubt is that 1995 has been another tragic year for media freedom," the International Federation of Journalists said in its annual report.

Seven journalists died in Russia, four in Brazil and three each in Bosnia, Colombia and Sri Lanka. This year's total was down from a record high of 115 last year, when 48 journalists were killed in Rwanda alone. Seventy-five journalists were killed in 1993, and 62 in 1992.

The report predicted that danger spots for journalists next year would be Russia, Nigeria, Colombia, Peru, China and Indonesia. The figures include reporters, editors, broadcasters and photographers killed for their opinions.

Four survive as US airliner crashes into mountainside

FROM DAVID ADAMS IN MIAMI

AT LEAST four passengers were rescued yesterday from the wreckage of an American Airlines jet that crashed into a mountainside in southwest Colombia. More than 150 people on board were killed.

"It's a miracle," said Brigadier General Jorge Miranda Carpio, co-ordinator of the rescue effort in the town of Buga, near where the Boeing 757 crashed en route from Miami to Cali, minutes before it was due to touch down.

"Imagine (surviving after) a plane flying at 800 kilometers an hour (500mph) crashes into a mountain," he said.

A miracle indeed. The small colonial town, nestled in the Andean foothills about 25 miles north of Cali, is known as "the city of miracles". A shrine in the cathedral bearing the image of "the Miraculous Christ of Buga" is a place of pilgrimage every year.

The first survivor, Mauricio Reyes of Colombia, a 19-year-old business student at the University of Michigan, was brought by helicopter to a military base in Buga and then taken to a hospital in Cali. He was breathing from an oxygen mask and had

visible cuts and bruises. His brother Andres Reyes, 26, waiting at the base, leapt with joy and hugged relatives when he heard his brother was alive.

A second survivor, Raúl Alfonso Hurtado, a doctor, also was evacuated. His condition was not immediately known.

A team of FBI agents and aviation experts, some from Boeing, were yesterday on their way to Colombia. The twin-engine Boeing 757 is one of the most modern jets in service, with a perfect safety record since entering the market in 1983.

Although the area north of Cali is a "red zone" of anti-government guerrilla activity, officials do not suspect sabotage. Weather was reported to be clear, but aviation officials in Colombia said the plane was 13 miles east of its path and flying well below the correct altitude. Radio contact was lost only minutes before it was due to land.

One civil defence worker reported seeing three survivors, two of them sitting upright and conscious in a clearing near the wreck. He said cloud cover had prevented

airlifting them to safety. However, local Colombian radio put the number of survivors at five — two men, two women and a small child.

Aviation officials say it is the worst crash of an American airliner since the 1988 bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, in Scotland, which killed 270 people seven years ago yesterday.

Most passengers on yesterday's flight were believed to be Colombians living in the United States who were on their home to spend Christmas with relatives.

Witnesses said the aircraft — carrying 156 passengers, including four infants, and eight crew — flew into the side of Mount San José on Wednesday evening and exploded in a fireball, spreading wreckage over a wide area. Rescuers were unable to reach the crash site, in a mountainous area of thick woods, until early yesterday morning.

The Londoño family were blessing their good fortune after heavy snow meant they missed the connecting flight by minutes. "I'm sorry for all the other families," said Angelica Londoño.

Corruption prosecutor is charged

Rome: Antonio Di Pietro, the former Italian prosecutor regarded as an anti-corruption hero, is facing charges of extortion and abuse of office.

The accusations against him include extorting a 100 million lire (£42,500) interest-free loan from an insurance executive, passing on legal work for the insurance company to his wife, and accepting a Mercedes from the firm. He is to appear in court in February.

Paolo Berlusconi, brother of Silvio Berlusconi, the former Prime Minister, was jailed for 16 months for paying bribes to obtain a building permit for a golf course. (Reuters/AP)

Pakistan car bomb kills 21

Peshawar: At least 21 people were killed by a car bomb that ripped through a street outside a department store in this northwestern Pakistani city, according to witnesses. More than 50 were wounded.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blast, which follows a suicide car bombing at the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad on November 19 that killed 16 people and wounded more than 60. (Reuters)

Editor charged over EU memoir

Copenhagen: The editor of the daily *Politiken*, who printed spicy memoirs by Ritt Bjerregaard, an EU Commissioner, about European leaders which were withdrawn before publication, has been charged with copyright violation.

If found guilty, Tøger Seidenfaden could face up to one year in prison and his paper be forced to pay up to 11.4 million kroner (£1.3 million) in compensation. (AP)

Cousteau claim legal victory

Sydney: Oceanographer Jacques Cousteau and his son, Jean-Michel, both claimed victory after a San Francisco judge ruled that an eco-tourist resort in Fiji be named the "Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji Islands Resort", adding "Jean-Michel". Jacques Cousteau had asked that the name "Cousteau" be dropped or "Jean-Michel" added. (AP)

Accident fails to deter Murdoch

Sydney: Rupert Murdoch, the chairman and chief executive of The News Corporation, parent company of *The Times*, vowed to take part in next week's Sydney-Hobart yacht race, despite nearly losing the top half of his right index finger in a sailing accident this week.

Farrakhan loses

New York: The \$2.7 billion libel suit by Louis Farrakhan, the Nation of Islam leader, against the *New York Post*, which alleged that Malcolm X's widow blamed him for her husband's murder, has been dismissed. (AP)



Princess Marie, centre, with her sisters Tatiana, left, and Anastasia

Russian exile revives Romanov mystery

FROM QUENTIN LETTS
IN NEW YORK

ANOTHER alleged Romanov has emerged from the mists of Bolshevik Russia. A New York newspaper yesterday reported that a Bulgarian village doctor's wife who died in 1954 may have been Princess Marie, third daughter of Tsar Nicholas II. The intriguing story, impossible to prove, is the latest in a series of romantic claims about the late Russian Imperial Family.

The elegant, Russian-speaking woman, known as Yelconara Alekseyeva, arrived in the Bulgarian village of Gabarevo soon after the Tsar and members of his family were killed in a cellar

near Yekaterinburg. The fate of Princess Marie was not certain. Some said she survived the shooting.

Mrs Alekseyeva inspired much gossip among Gabarevo's many White Russian exiles. Yesterday's *Wall Street Journal* disclosed that she owned exotic dogs, spoke French worthily of a courtier, passed her spare time with books or by painting, and that, unusually, she owned a piano. All suggested aristocratic origins.

She wore a scarf around her neck — to conceal a bullet wound scar, she said — and was accompanied by an infirm, crippled young man. The Romanov Prince Aleksei, who is also

rumoured to have survived Ekaterinburg, was, by chance, a sickly, hobbling youth.

Like Princess Marie, Mrs Alekseyeva was tall, slender and had blue eyes. The facial resemblance was reportedly strong. Mrs Alekseyeva named her dog Maron, which is an anagram of "Romanov", as in Romanov. Maron was a black and white cocker spaniel, the breed favoured by Princess Marie's mother, Empress Alexandra.

When Wehrmacht troops marched through Gabarevo during the Second World War Mrs Alekseyeva spoke to them in fluent German — the mother tongue of the Empress — but

made herself scarce when Stalin's troops passed through at the end of the war.

Bulgarian researchers hope soon to persuade their Government to send a sample of her handwriting to Moscow where it could be compared to extracts from Princess Marie's diary.

For all the coincidences, however, Robert Massie, who wrote *The Romanovs: The Final Chapter*, is not convinced. Mr Massie said he could not accept the claim because Mrs Alekseyeva's bones were broken up when her tomb in Gabarevo was bulldozed to make way for a park. Therefore DNA tests cannot be conducted to confirm or deny suspicions of the woman's secret identity.



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'Ritual mourning' decreed by rabbi over Bethlehem

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER AND ROSS DUNN IN BETHLEHEM

AS RELIEVED Israeli troops yesterday completed their handover of Bethlehem to Palestinian control, a former chief rabbi ordered all Israelis who visit the area to rend their clothes in ritual mourning at the biblical town's switch to Arab control.

Rabbi Mordechai Eliahu made his ruling at the first meeting of rabbis from Jewish settlements since the killing of Yitzhak Rabin on November 4. The assassination was said to have been religiously inspired in an effort to stop the handing back of territory regarded by right-wing Jews as Israel's biblical heritage.

According to Jewish tradition, the rending of one's garment is made after the death of a close relative.

However, Rabbi Eliahu ruled that it was also incumbent on those who see "Judea in its destruction", a reference to the name used by right-wing Israelis for part of the occupied West Bank conquered in 1967. He said that even soldiers should obey the order, although their uniforms were not their personal property.

The decree failed to sour the carnival atmosphere in Manger Square as the last Israeli military trucks roared off in the direction of nearby Jerusa-

lem. Fireworks lit up the sky and hundreds of Palestinians ripped down the 40ft metal fence surrounding the former Israeli police station opposite the 4th century Church of the Nativity with their hands.

Large chunks of the fence were taken away as souvenirs. "For us it is like the Berlin Wall. It was the symbol of our humiliation," said the owner of the aptly-named Christmas Tree cafe. One of the last Israeli soldiers to leave, Saada Shaheen, said: "We hated the situation here. We were ner-

vous. We all wanted to go." As Vassil Arafat, who is due to deliver an address from the roof of the Nativity Church on December 24.

"For us, he is our Jesus Christ, he is our president," said one teenager waving a handful of Palestinian flags which for the past 28

years, we all wanted to go. As Vassil Arafat, who is due to deliver an address from the roof of the Nativity Church on December 24.

that like the East Germans after re-unification, the Palestinians do not find things not meeting their expectations.

The rabbi's ruling underscored the deep divisions created inside the Jewish state by the Government's persistence in handing back West Bank towns to the Arabs in advance of Palestinian elections on January 20. It came as Israel Radio reported that Shin Bet, the internal security service, had informed the Cabinet of new plans by right-wing Jews to assassinate Shimon Peres, the Prime Minister, and other leading Cabinet doves.

The report, later authenticated by senior security sources, disclosed that Shin Bet had told Mr Peres that Jewish religious leaders were backing the renewal of "threats and plots" against ministers.

Shin Bet officials said that intelligence reports showed that the right-wing opponents of peace were now operating often in small groups which made them difficult to apprehend.

Yesterday, dubbed "Liberation Day" by the 40,000 ecstatic Bethlehem residents, the town was banned to Jewish settlers by the Israeli military.

Christmasses under Israeli rule have been banned from Manger Square.

Earlier, Michel Sabbah, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, rejected criticism that the decision of Mr Arafat, a Muslim, to attend the televised Roman Catholic mid-night Mass on Christmas Eve was transforming a religious occasion, watched by millions of Christians, around the world, into a political spectacle. "Mr Arafat's desire to attend the Mass shows a respect for religion," he said.

Many Western tourists were caught up in yesterday's celebrations which went on long into the night. Christiane Rauff, 27, from Frankfurt, said: "I never expected to be at a moment of history like this. I just hope

that the East Germans after re-unification, the Palestinians do not find things not meeting their expectations.

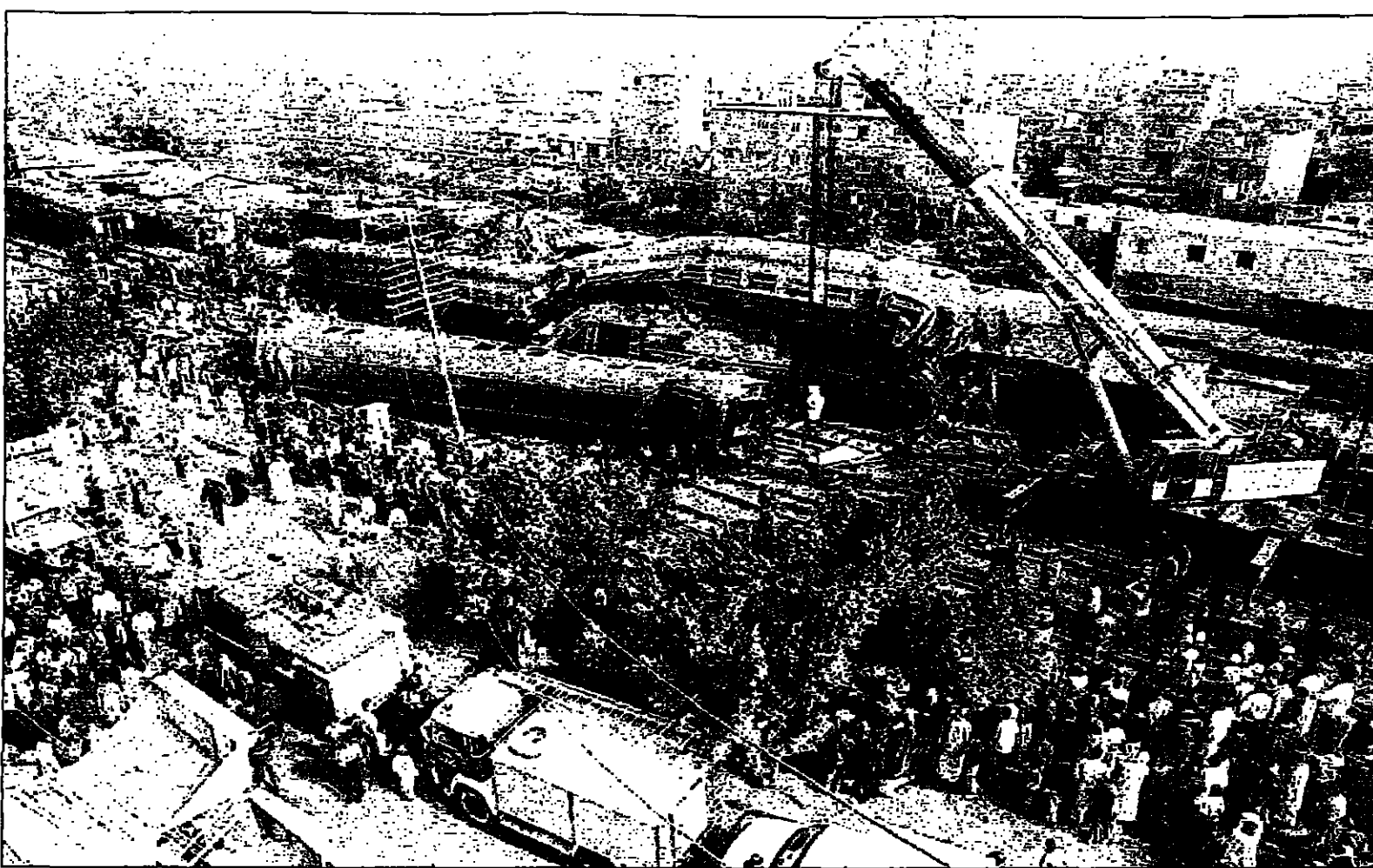
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Leading article, page 15



Rescue workers start to remove the wreckage of yesterday's crash near Cairo, the worst rail accident in Egypt for 15 years

Egyptian train collision in fog kills at least 75

FROM REUTERS IN EL BADRSHEIN, EGYPT

IN the worst disaster on the Egyptian railways for more than 15 years, 75 people were killed and 76 injured yesterday when a crowded train ran into the back of another in thick fog.

Witnesses in the town of El

Badrshein, 17 miles south of Cairo, said an early-morning train taking about 120 workers south to Beni Suef rammed a train to Asyut from behind at high speed. One carriage rode up on top of the others and two were derailed, one of them onto wooden stalls by the side of the track.

The driver of the second train,

Mahmoud Ali, said the first train should not have been there and he saw no red signal as he came to the last level-crossing before the crash. He has had his right leg amputated from below the knee in El Badrshein hospital.

Mohamed Dessouki Fayad, a labourer who survived in the second

train, said: "Our train seemed to be going at more than 60mph ... We collided with the other one and felt all the carriages crashing into one another."

Hassan Nigm, the local police chief, said the latest casualty figures were 75 dead and 76 injured. The toll could rise when rescue workers lift the carriages.

Peking excludes Hong Kong Democrats

FROM JONATHAN MIRSKY IN HONG KONG

CHINA has delivered its newest blow to Hong Kong by excluding Democrats from the preparatory committee which will oversee the establishment of the new Government here after 1997.

There will be 94 Hong Kong members on the 150-member committee. The list, approved by President Jiang Zemin, will be ratified by the National People's Congress next Thursday. The committee will select 400 Hong Kong citizens to form an election committee which in turn will designate a chief executive, from Hong

Kong, to replace the Governor in 1997.

The preparatory committee will also decide which Hong Kong laws — such as the Bill of Rights — should be amended or repealed in 1997 and who will serve on the provisional legislature which takes the place of the present elected body which China calls illegitimate.

Most of the names for the committee are known. The chairman will be Qian Qichen, the Foreign Minister, and two of the four vice-chairmen will be Lu Ping,

director of the State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, and Zhou Nan, director of the Hong Kong branch of the New China News Agency, Peking's de facto embassy here.

Also on the committee will be ten members of the 60-member Legislative Council, many tycoons such as Li Ka-shing, one of the colony's richest men, Sir Run-run Shaw, the movie magnate, and Sir S. Y. Chung, a former council member who last month spelt out how Peking would establish a "second

power centre" here before 1997. However, there will be no Democrats, who scored most heavily with the voters in the September elections for the Legislative Council.

Tsang Tsang-ho, a vice-chairman of the National People's Congress standing committee, said: "Those who are anti-China will only hinder the committee. We want people who would like to co-operate."

Yeung Sum, vice-chairman of the Democrats, attacked the exclusion of his party. "Citizens will question why no one

from the most popular political party is appointed," Chris Patten, the Governor, said last night. "Everybody knows that when you consider the views of the community you cannot ignore the fact that the Democratic Party does extremely well in elections. So it would be odd to say the Democratic Party did not represent a lot of views in Hong Kong."

Among the mainland members will be Chen Yuan, deputy governor of the Bank of China and a son of the late Chen Yun, a founder of the Chinese Communist Party.

Portillo vows to defend accord

BY OUR FOREIGN STAFF

ANYONE breaking the Bosnia-Herzegovina Peace Accord will face "robust action" from the Nato-led peace implementation force, Michael Portillo, the British Defence Secretary, said in Sarajevo yesterday.

"We are going to be even-handed, we are going to use persuasion where we can, but we have the weaponry and will-power to ensure that the peace agreement is enforced," he said. Mr Portillo arrived in the Bosnian capital after visiting British troops deployed in central Gornji Vakuf.

"If any breakaway faction thinks that it can question the authority of the Dayton agreement they must think again," he said. The Defence Secretary said Britain would soon have 13,000 of its troops deployed in Bosnia, where "we will be bringing in Challenger tanks, 155mm heavy artillery and attack helicopters, so we will have robust weaponry".

Earlier yesterday Admiral Leighton Smith, the American commander of Nato's operation, said Bosnia's military leaders had agreed to "co-operate fully" with the implementation force. The pledge came at a meeting at Sarajevo airport between Nato commanders and the chiefs of staff of the Bosnian, Croat and Serb forces to set guidelines for the one-year peace mission.

"Each of them said they had passed instructions to their forces to co-operate fully with the force, and we have seen that in evidence about the way they are reacting on the ground," the admiral said.

Before the meeting, he said alliance soldiers had been received with "open arms" in areas where they were deploying. "We've been here 24 hours and I'm just tickled pink by what I see already and I hope it continues," he added in his first assessment of the operation started this week.

After a two-day conference in Brussels, the international community agreed yesterday to fund a \$500 million (£327 million) rebuilding package for Bosnia.

Cambodia Prince starts journey to French exile

FROM TOM WALKER IN PHNOM PENH

PRINCE Norodom Sirivudh of Cambodia, who is charged with plotting to assassinate Hun Sen, the joint Prime Minister, flew secretly into Singapore yesterday en route to exile in France.

The 44-year-old half-brother of King Norodom Sihanouk has maintained his innocence but agreed to be exiled under a deal brokered by the King, and approved by Hun Sen, to resolve one of the most serious crises for Cambodia's two-year-old coalition.

Diplomatic sources in Singapore said he was whisked off through VIP channels at Changi airport after arriving from Phnom Penh. The Prince, secretary-general of the royalist Funcinpec party, is expected to leave on Saturday night and arrive on Christmas Eve in Paris, where his children are now staying with relatives.

Prince Norodom's French wife, Princess Christine, has accused Cambodia's ruling clique of "Burmeseising" the country. She fears a show trial of her husband on trumped-up charges could wreck any hopes of free elections in 1998. Legal proceedings against the Prince are expected to continue. He could be sentenced to life in prison if convicted.

The Princess, a Unesco environmental adviser, has vowed to remain in Phnom Penh. "Why shouldn't I stay?" she demanded.

She added that Hun Sen and his partner, Prince

Ranariddh, were a worse clique than Rangoon's military junta. "At least there they never even pretended it was a democracy," she added.

Hun Sen, a former Khmer Rouge divisional commander, fled to Vietnam in 1977 during the genocide of Pol Pot. He returned two years later to become the most powerful politician in Cambodia.

Prince Norodom's arrest — executed with the aid of tanks and snipers — followed a tapped telephone conversation in which the Prince apparently outlined how Hun Sen could be assassinated on a lonely highway. Along with Sam Rainsy, a former Foreign Minister whose Khmer National Party has been banned by Hun Sen, Prince Norodom is widely regarded as one of Cambodia's most honest politicians, and human rights



Princess Christine: she vowed to stay behind

experts are deeply sceptical of the charges.

"Sirivudh likes to make jokes — sometimes not very good ones — and he likes to show off what he can do," said one lawyer. "I think this may have been a combination of anger and habit — but there is no way a tapped tape can be used as prima facie evidence against him."

"We are swimming in complete absurdity," said Princess Christine. "We're in a fantastic mishmash where the UN has tried to place all sorts of legal texts upon a good old fashioned communist dictatorship."

"My husband has never been in trouble in his life, and he has always behaved knowing that. You fight in the political arena, you don't use tanks. But he made a big mistake: he greatly underestimated where Hun Sen came from for the last 25 years."

Mr Rainsy, who is lobbying politicians in Washington on Cambodia's political malaise, said: "He [Hun Sen] has become suspicious of everybody, he sees enemies everywhere — it is a kind of paranoia. There is an atmosphere of fear, of terror. The international community cannot stand idle."

For the moment, though, that is exactly what embassies are doing, fearing comment could spark the violence long promised by Hun Sen. Privately, diplomats concede that democracy is no longer the priority in Cambodia.

US falls for Austen's new Emma

FROM GILES WHITTILL IN LOS ANGELES

ONE hundred and seventy-eight years after her death, Jane Austen's chances of recognition by the Hollywood establishment have been boosted with six Golden Globe nominations for Emma Thompson's adaptation of her novel, *Sense and Sensibility*.

In a promising omen for British success at next year's Oscars, *Sense and Sensibility* won six nominations for

Golden Globe awards, more than any other film, including hotly tipped American releases such as *The American President* and *Casino*.

Emma Thompson, who once again finds herself the darling of American critics, was nominated as best actress and for her screenplay. Other categories in which the film stands to win include best film, best director (for Ang Lee, a Taiwanese) and best supporting actress (Britain's Kate Winslett). Nixon, Oliver

Stone's controversial film biography of the disgraced President, was snubbed by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which hands out the Golden Globes, although Sir Anthony Hopkins won a nomination for best actor. He faces tough competition from Sir Ian McKellen, nominated for *Richard III*, and from Nicholas Cage who plays a suicidal drunk in *Leaving Las Vegas*.

The Golden Globes are to be presented on January 21.

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Astrology. Why Shelley needs it

Having always believed that the fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in our selves, that we are underlings, I cast a sceptical eye over the horoscopes of Shelley von Strunckel. "The past few weeks have hardly been dull ones," Miss von Strunckel told me, a Taurus, in the *Evening Standard* on the eve of our meeting — true — "but all is not said and done. In fact with your ruler Venus first meeting the planet of Innovation, Uranus, and then moving into the eccentric Aquarius, the biggest surprise of all is yet to come."

I invite her to be more specific, but she tells me it is "just one of those times" when Uranus is in transition, so one cannot anticipate the surprise: "it will be not just a logical progression but a leap, which defies sequential logic."

Ms von Strunckel, a substantial personality in every respect, looks at me beadily when I declare that since I am not looking for any leaping changes I do not need astrology. "A lot of people don't need it. But it would be interesting to look at your chart. There are times when life throws you a left curve," she says. "This is when people come to me, and that is the pleasure and responsibility of my job. It's a bit like doing the *Times* crossword: you get certain fixed facts, and fill in the gaps with sequential reason."

Private clients pay £80 for 45 minutes with her. "And you haven't a snowball's chance in hell of getting to know who my private clients are."

Bright girls, as she points out, are not advised by career counsellors to go in for astrology. But it is a lucrative and burgeoning niche of popular journalism in an egocentric era. Ms von Strunckel has inherited the mantle of the late Patric Walker, who earned at least £500,000 a year with his syndicated horoscopes and chose her as his preferred successor. She makes her predictions weekly in *The Sunday Times*, nightly in the *Standard* and monthly in *Vogue*. She has thus become, in her words, "astrology's most visible exponent". "Because of

THE VALERIE GROVE INTERVIEW



being American, perhaps, I am a little more intriguing, and I have a slightly smarter image." It is almost impossible, she told me, to take a bad photograph of her: but she preferred to supply this one herself.

Ms von Strunckel lives in a block of mansion flats in Westminster much inhabited by MPs — the Pattens and Portillos have departed but she has Roy Hattersley downstairs. This week she was so busy recording new year programmes for radio and television that we met at the Langham Hotel, near the BBC, where she spotted Hugh Scully across the palm court.

I confess that the only time I ever noted her predecessor's prognostics was when I was desperately keen to have a second baby in 1978. Patric Walker's horoscope for Taurus for that year included the line: "Those hoping for an addition to their families can expect some good news before the end of the year." Well, as it turned out, by December 31 I was indeed pregnant, but only with the aid of modern scientific devices administered by Dame Josephine Barnes. So despite the prediction's correct and happy outcome, I became not a dedicated follower of Mr Walker, but highly respectful of medical advances.

"There are cycles to nature, that's obvious," she said, "and we get ourselves into hot water if we ignore this. If you had consulted an astrologer that year, you might have been told it would not be easy or straightforward. Astrological cycles only mirror events on

For 12 days, from tomorrow, the editorial columns of *The Times* will take a light-hearted look at famous people and their star signs, and offer some tongue-in-cheek advice for 1996. Here, the new queen of astrologers offers a defence of the predictive art

earth, they don't make them happen. To a person who wishes to get pregnant, or set up a business, I would say, well, Jupiter is in your sign, the planet of expansion; but to capitalise on it you probably need to bestir yourself."

She was born on July 15, 1946, in Los Angeles, "the ideal place to grow up for someone who has the character to create themselves — where anybody can become President... or just be a narcissistic animal who bakes on the beach, which was not my cup of tea."

Where did her name come from? "Well it isn't Irish," she says. She vaguely thinks it is Austrian. "And since it's von there must be a Strunckel somewhere." (not according to my *Times* atlas) "but I'm still looking for my Schloss."

She was an only child: good at maths and science but "artsy" too. "In late 1950s and early 60s there was a lot of questioning around, and a lot of gurus around, so one could go take a look." She became an initiate of the Vedanta temple, a haven of serenity and peace hard by the Hollywood freeway where Huxley and Isherwood had meditated before her.

She took a Saturday job in a department store, Bullock's ("like Selfridges, posh but not stuffy"), and decided to abandon college and carve a career as a fashion buyer. "It was the beginning of my being able to intuit the collective mentality. I learnt how to buy 400 polyester pants suits and love them because they 'fly out', which is buyerspeak for selling well. Nothing reproaches you more than an unsold dress: it just hangs there and says 'dumb choice'. I now have a pretty respectable business consultancy, and it is that sense of the market that allows me to

address my private clients in terms that are useful to them."

On one sad day, two people close to her died (one was her half-brother) and her bosses refused to let her take time off. "So I realised that this was a glamour business but also a vernal one."

She drifted instead into astrology, like this. "One day a lawyer asked me to advise him on a case, and as it happened I was able to tell him that his client was suppressing evidence, and what the evidence was, and why. The client was a PhD chemist in New Jersey. The lawyer paid me, and the chemist came to study with me." Before long she was lecturing in India — "coals to Newcastle and blatant cheek" — at the international conference of the Theosophical Society. "My success was notable in terms of feedback," she says, "but it was not remotely lucrative for a long time. So I learnt to economise."

Astrology, she divined, was like fashion: it was about cycles. She now gets so many clients from banking and finance she fancies doing a stars column for a business magazine. She can predict, for instance, that "pollution is likely to become a severe problem, therefore manufacturers of catalytic converters should thrive."

Also: "From now until April 96, almost all the slow-moving planets which dictate the collective mood and influence the economy, and which make their way round the zodiac in a very 'leisurely' fashion, actually change sides. So things can really shift. Money is

going to be much more available as banks realise they're not making money because they're not loaning it. Banks will re-strategise — as they did in the mid-80s: the Plaza effect. If you think of Plaza, that door personality of the underworld, it is not surprising that during that period, black was the dominant colour. At a party last night four of us were standing together, all wearing red. That's an anecdotal example of the change ahead."

When she came to live in London she cleverly acquired a half-share in a remarkably cheap flat in Knightsbridge. In 1988, when taken to a Bow Group conference on Maastricht at Jesus College, Oxford, she met a Chancery barrister named Nigel Gerald. They married at St Mary's, Bourne Street, a jewel of a church with Pre-Raphaelite frescoes, just the place to go, she says, "if you like transcendent music with one's religion and believe that music can enliven the spirit". She will be at midnight Mass there this Sunday.

Before his death Patric Walker encouraged several people to expect to be his successor — including Miles Chapman, deputy editor of the *Evening Standard* magazine. Does that mean that just anyone could do this? "No no, there is a proper degree graduate faculty with a fine course in astrology."

Where? "I don't have it in my head. But Miles has done it, and so has the girl who is going to do the stars in the *Mail* on Sunday, Sally Broompton."

Newspaper offices are not, generally, repositories of woolly thinking, and frankly regard horoscopes as useful mass reader-drawing stuff, but ultimately baloney.

Y et a gang of astrologers — Jonathan Cainer, Russell Grant, Nick Campion and Ms von Strunckel — has formed a sort of union, "because of the utter chaos and disarray that erupted in February over the alleged 13th sign", says Ms von Strunckel. "An astronomer who knew nothing of astrology made an ill-judged comment. So those of us who care about the image of astrology decided to form an informal union which will in future issue press releases."

For herself, she regards her writing as an art "with literary allusions, and rich language, because I love literature". What is she reading at the moment? "Oh gosh. This is the great tragedy, not having enough time to read. But my desert island books would be all Jane Austen."

Last night she had sat next to Jonathan Newhouse, of *Condé Nast*, at dinner, "and I volunteered what his rising sign is, which I never normally do. I realise how penetrating I can be."

But surely the knack of being able to write newspaper and magazine star signs is not



Meteoric: Shelley von Strunckel says she has become "astrology's most visible exponent"

to be penetrating or specific, but to present the reader with soothing platitudes which one can take or leave?

"All counsel should be taken or left," said Ms von Strunckel firmly, "including that of lawyers."

Nick Campion, president of the Astrological Association, a Cambridge graduate, defends

the horoscope-writer's skill — a core of data, embellished by intuitive perception — as a social science.

"The newspaper horoscope fulfils the kind of function societies have always needed since ancient times: like the oracle, with its riddles, or the *I Ching*. The astrologer speaks universal truths, and the reader

engages with the words as they need them. We are accused of being vague and ambiguous, but it is harmless, it can be useful, it's less time-consuming than therapy, cheaper than analysis, and it comes without the dogma of religion." And, as Ms von Strunckel says, it is fun. Like a Christmas cracker.

No sign of peace at the Oasis

Christmas is that mistily sentimental time of family togetherness. Black sheep are welcomed back into the flock, and made to wear hideous Aran sweaters knitted by Auntie Pat. Rolling stones stop to gather moss, and an extra two stones in weight, thanks to Cadbury's selection boxes and extra-large helpings of scorched figgy pudding.

All is love and familial reconciliation unless, that is, you're Noel and Liam Gallagher, the "battling Gallagher brothers" of the pop band Oasis. In a fairly successful attempt to top a year that has already seen two members of the band leave (and one rejoin), (*What's The Story?*) *Morning Glory* became the fastest selling album since the release of Michael Jackson's *Bad* and a highly public feud with chart rivals Blur, Oasis seem to be going all out to end the year on the most spectacular note of all — a highly emotional break-up of the band.

Relationships between Liam (the younger, cute-bit-of-rough lead singer) and Noel (the songwriter and lyricist) have been fractious from the beginning. The first feature the NME ever ran on Oasis had them squabbling so hard that Liam broke a chair over Noel's head, and the fight became so heated they were banned for life from a chain of ferry operators — all because Noel jokingly said he would sell his mother for a chance for Oasis to become famous. The months that followed saw the kind of hotel-trashing high jinks that seemed to have come to an end when The Who settled down.

Oasis are still banned from the Columbia Hotel in London after an incident with the owner's Mercedes which resulted in a hefty repair bill winging its way to the band's recording company, Creation. For a while it seemed Oasis stories were all gory and no glory. After the fall-out from the feud with Blur calmed down, things started to look rosy again. Bass-player Paul McGuigan rejoined the band after taking Prozac to cope with his nervous breakdown, and the first gigs he played with the band — the sell-out, record-breaking two nights at Earls Court — were

Caitlin Moran says blood will prove thicker than water between the battling Gallaghers



Brotherly love: Liam, left, and Noel

acclaimed as two of the most exhilarating celebrations of rock'n'roll this decade.

Noel Gallagher teamed up with Paul McCartney and Paul Weller under the pseudonym The Smokin' Mojo Filters, and released a cover version of the Beatles' *Come Together* for the War Child charity project. Things were going so well that in order to publicise their next single, the anthemic *Wonderwall*, Oasis decided to appear on *Later With Jools Holland* and play a three-number set which included a cover of Slade's *Cum On Feel The Noize* — whereupon disaster struck.

With only ten minutes to go before recording started, Liam Gallagher turned up, unshaven and obviously several nights down on his sleep quota. Relieved their lead singer had finally shown up, the band launched into *Cum On Feel The Noize* with Liam, still obviously drunk, joining in. No one quite knows what happened next, but after Liam and Noel "had a couple of words together" Liam stormed off, leaving Noel to carry out vocal duties for the rest of the show, which

had to be entirely reshoot, the lyrics scribbled out on a sheet of paper. Later, in the Green Room, Noel was asked about Liam's sudden departure, to which he replied: "He's lost his voice... and his job." Later, Noel was observed leaving the BBC's White City studio in tears. Understandably, this has led to fevered speculation, particularly when another world-famous pop star appears to be ready to take over Liam's vocal duties. Robbie Williams, formerly of Take That, has been pally with Oasis since this year's Glastonbury festival and is signed to Better Management, a company set up by Tim Abbott, one of Oasis's closest confidants. Rumours that Oasis have been considering signing a record deal with Abbott intensified when Gallagher made disparaging references to Creation.

Williams is certainly professional. He is possibly the only person famous enough to fill Liam's shoes, should Gallagher Jr get the boot. His hard-partying reputation suggests he would fit into Oasis easily, and his enrolment would be the story of 1996, the front page of every newspaper in Britain. But what all the speculation has failed to take into account is that Noel and Liam are brothers from a tough background in an impossible, highly public arena where drinking, drug-taking, hotel-smashing and fighting are all part of the job description. The tension of being recognised wherever you go, to the point that if you are seen out in public with a female friend you must have been secretly married in Honduras, is immensely wearing, and leads to volatility and a highly charged daily life.

Whatever battles are going on now in the Gallagher camp, they are probably no more heated than when the boys were freckle-nosed eight and ten-year-olds, squabbling over who was going to sleep in the top bunk. Oasis fight. They always have and they always will. But Oasis to split and recruit Robbie Williams as a new, all-dancing, all-singing lead singer? Never. It's a family affair.

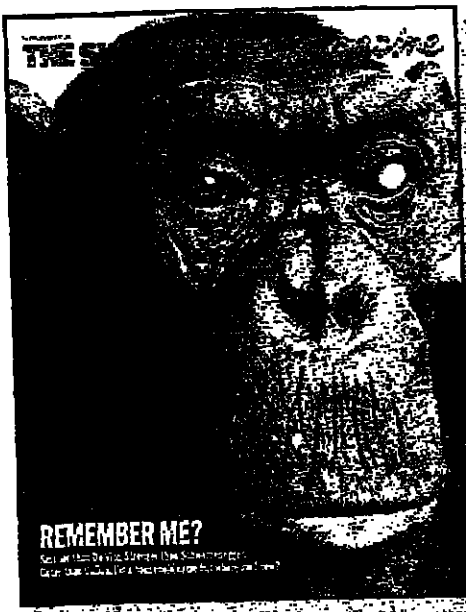
CHRISTMAS WITH RUMPOLE

"What I have against Christmas is that the courts are all shut and nobody is being tried," bemoans Horace Rumpole in a special short story written for the Christmas Eve issue of *The Sunday Times* by John Mortimer



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

This Sunday's Magazine is dedicated to names and faces who once enjoyed the limelight. One is the star of more than 50 Hollywood films who now, at the age of 63, lives quietly in Palm Springs



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The royal split reflects today's moral values

Would a royal divorce cause a stampede?

The impending divorce of the Prince and Princess of Wales has the potential to be one of the most significant events in the history of marital breakdown. The nation has watched the royal couple's marriage disintegrate into bitter public sniping, and it now awaits the sorry saga's inevitable conclusion in the courts.

While divorce is commonplace nowadays, it has followed a trend that has been affected by outside influences, such as the various law reforms over the past century, which have made divorce much easier. Another influence has been the change in morality which has removed the stigma. Many couples, however, still soldier on, often "for the sake of the children". But the unprecedented public airing of the problems behind the breakdown of the Wales's marriage has put the royal stamp of approval on "breaking up" rather than "making up", which could inspire many to follow in their footsteps.

As the Queen advises a swift solution in the divorce courts, it is all a far cry from the days when divorce was a mark of perdition or profound failure. In 1929, the BBC's chief engineer, Peter Eckersley, was forced to resign when his marriage ended. He said in his autobiography that he had to leave his

position when "I was about to become what is called 'the guilty party'". During the abdication crisis of 1936, Stanley Baldwin, the Prime Minister, told Edward VIII that Tory backbenchers would not stomach a divorced woman as Britain's Queen. He was told he had to choose between the twice-divorced American Wallis Simpson and the throne. The then Archbishop of Canterbury also made it clear he would not crown Edward if he was married to Mrs Simpson.

Bygone days of scandal and shame now seem curiously archaic, illustrating the dramatic changes that have taken place in society's moral values. Although divorce became legal for the masses in 1857, only 24 couples took advantage of the new freedom that year. By 1911, the annual divorce figure had grown to a mere 580 and the rate of increase was extremely slow until the first major liberalisation in 1937, the Divorce Reform Act, when grounds for divorce widened from adultery to include desertion, cruelty, insanity and unnatural offences by the husband.

Until 1937, proven adultery was the only way to get a divorce and if actual adultery could not be stomached, an understanding husband could usually

The present royal saga is another step in the breakdown of the divorce taboo, says Joanna Bale

fake something with a private detective, a camera, a Brighton hotel bill and a prostitute whose only duties were to be seen in bed with the husband for a few minutes.

Proving adultery was expensive, embarrassing and carried an enormous social stigma. It was largely the preserve of the rich, but not even they entered into it lightly. Nevertheless, the divorce rate climbed more or less continually prompting changes in the law aiming to make it easier for couples to split. The figures show that each change in the law has been followed by a surge in divorces.

The rise has been dramatic, even without the spectacular upward "blip" when thousands of returning Second World War servicemen found all was not sweetness and light on the home front. This led to 60,000 divorces in 1947, and in 1949 legal aid made it possible for all classes to divorce. The

post-war figures sank to 31,000 in 1950 and then to 23,000 in 1958, but the underlying trend was still upwards.

In 1969, just as the era of sexual liberation and radical lifestyles was reaching its peak, a revised Divorce Reform Act was born, allowing divorce by consent for "irretrievable breakdown" of marriage after a two-year separation.

In 1973 there was a further change in the law with the introduction of the "quickie" divorce when couples who had agreed to split up no longer had to appear in court.

By 1993 the number of divorces hit a record 165,000, with 176,000 children involved, placing Britain at the top of the European divorce league. Last year the divorce total dropped by 10,000, a move hailed by experts at Relate, the marriage guidance group, as evidence that more couples are realising the traumatic effects that breakup has on children. Others said it was simply that the number of people getting married was falling off.

At the moment divorce is granted on the basis of irretrievable breakdown. After five years, except in very rare cases, a divorce is granted automatically. After a two-year mutual separation, a divorce can be granted without the need for additional evidence. If evi-

dence of adultery, unreasonable behaviour or desertion is provided, a "quickie" can be obtained within a few months.

Next year, the Commons is expected to approve the Divorce Reform Bill which proposes that the only proof needed of marriage breakdown should be the passing of one year after one or both spouses have formally declared the marriage has broken down. Couples will be encouraged to go to mediation sessions with trained counsellors to work out arrangements for the children and financial settlements.

About one in three marriages is destined to end in divorce and taking into account couples cohabiting, any given family has a 50/50 chance of splitting up.

Although the days when divorce was rare and shameful are long gone, the prospect of the Princess of Wales becoming a divorcee will finally obliterate any remaining stigma, particularly in the minds of many women who sympathised with her predicament after her revelatory *Panorama* interview. If the Prince subsequently becomes the country's first divorced King, then the surge of social acceptability will have permeated through to the very heart of the Establishment.

Stopping the shopping addiction

As a cure-all it can't be beaten: you feel down, you go shopping, you cheer up. Everyone knows that people who say money can't buy you happiness simply don't know where to shop. A day out at the sales is a top way to banish the blues: fewer side-effects than Prozac, less fattening than a box of Belgian chocolates and less damaging to your street cred than an evening on the sofa snuffling at a video of *Brief Encounter*.

For some people, however, shopping is an addiction. Like alcoholics or gamblers, shopaholics know that their spending habits are out of control but have no idea how to stop.

Now the Government is recognising shopaholism as a serious disorder which can lead to debt and misery — and is funding Richard Elliott, a consumer psychologist and Oxford Fellow in management studies, to carry out an investigation into addictive shopping.

According to Dr Elliott, 2 to 4 per cent of the British population are addictive shoppers. "It is closely linked to credit cards," he says. "Very few people pay for their purchases in cash and most have three or four cards, so they can run up debts very quickly."

"This is an inevitable part of the consumer culture. Shopping is now our prime out-of-home leisure experience and, just as most people enjoy going to the pub without getting hooked on alcohol, most of us have fun going on an occasional shopping spree. But a few find they can't stop."

You can see the designer-clad victims drifting along Bond Street like zombies, or rifling through the high street sales bargain bins with fervent concentration.

Jackie Onassis was a prime example of a shopper who could run up a \$100,000 bill in ten minutes anywhere in the world. Truman Capote, who regularly accompanied her on her sprees, recalled how she would walk into a shop, calmly order two dozen silk blouses in different shades and walk out. "She seemed dazed, hypnotised," he said.

Closer to home, the Princess of Wales shows all the characteristic signs of someone whose passion for shopping is out of control. Recently she was seen in a newsagent in Kensington buying every CD in the top 20. For her trip to Italy, she bought two identical Versace dresses: one in black and one in white.

As the heroine of the recent hit film *Clueless*, Cher could find no better cure for a dose of existential angst than a quick trawl round the mall. Even at the height of her depression (her mother has died of a routine liposuction and "I'm a virgin who can't drive") she is instantly revived by the sight

The Government is to fund a study of shopaholism. Julia Llewellyn Smith reports on a serious disorder

of a designer dress in a shop window, which seconds later she is carrying off in a large bag.

The compulsion can affect people at every level of society. Sue Eccles, Dr Elliott's assistant, who has interviewed 50 compulsive shoppers for the study, says: "Some were unemployed, some were directors of fairly large national companies. Some were well educated, others weren't educated at all. Some were married, some were single. Most of them were very articulate and amusing people, whose friends would never have guessed they had a problem." Nearly half the interviewees had been in debt to the point where it had caused them worry and hardship, and most had never talked about their problem before.

According to Ms Eccles, nearly all addictions begin as a cure for some other unhappiness. "Shopping begins as a cushion for other problems and then it becomes a problem in its own right. Everybody occasionally thinks 'damn it, I'm going to buy something nice and treat myself. I certainly have days like that. But for some people, this becomes a pathological habit.'"

What gives shopaholics their kicks is the buying process itself. "Once they have left the shop and got home, the possession of goods loses any impact or use," Ms Eccles says. "What's important is the run-up to the decision, the challenge of finding that one special thing and paying for it, and the feeling of having control over a credit card."

Lawrence Michaels, a former addict who spent more than £30,000 on records and clothes, says: "As soon as I got home I would hide what I'd bought. If my wife found it, I'd say someone had given it to me. Once I'd put it away, I wasn't interested in it any more. The thrill came from the split second in which I paid for it. The excitement passed immediately. It was a bit like taking a drug."

Mr Michaels is a rare thing, a male shopaholic. According to Ms Eccles, nearly all shopaholics are women. "Shops are a no-man's-land away from home or work, where women with partners and families can escape and nobody will interfere with them," she says. For that reason, they prefer to shop alone in luxurious department

stores and resent any contact with sales assistants.

"They want to be in their own little world of colour, style and nice fabrics. And although they are very alert to what they are doing, they are fairly unaware of what is going on around them," Ms Eccles says.

"One of the surprise findings of the investigation was that a good number of women are using shopping as a way of exerting pressure, control and revenge upon their husbands in an unhappy marriage," Dr Elliott says. "If the husband says 'I'm working late tonight', the woman thinks: 'Well damn you, I'm going out shopping.'"

"Often this problem affects women in their forties who married quite young and whose husbands still treat them as children. When they behave like this, the husbands have to take them seriously because they are running up huge debts."

Julie, 36, lives in the Midlands, works part-time at a local radio station and is married to David, 43, a hard-working doctor. She says: "If I think I am being done out of weekend trips away because my husband is a self-confessed workaholic, shopping is a way of getting back at him. I say 'Well, if you took more notice



Shopaholism is a real disorder which can lead to serious debt and misery

of me and more time off, I wouldn't have to do it, would I? He treats me in exactly the same way as when we were first married. I just can't get him to understand that I've changed. I don't know what to do any more."

Other addicts use shopping to give meaning to their lives. "They see themselves as extremely accomplished 'professional' shoppers who can always find the best purchase," Dr Elliott says. "They go on six-hour chases around the stores, noting slight differences in dresses and materials, comparing prices. Shopping is their way of developing a self-image and a sense of worth."

Mary, 58, who works full-time as an administrator and has been married three times, describes her shopping as "a mission". She is smartly dressed and lives in a tastefully decorated and furnished



Excitement in store: less fattening than a box chocolates and with fewer side-effects than tranquillisers, shopping can become an addiction

home. "I'm a very, very fussy shopper," she says.

"If I go into the shop for a sweater, I weigh them all up. I measure them all out, I can't make up my mind about three of the same colour. I bring them all home and try them on until 2am or 3am until I find the one that is just right. Then, when I've found the right one, I have to go back the next morning and buy one of every colour. Then they are forgotten, probably just hung up in the wardrobe and never worn."

"I bought the whole of the Burberry range — coat, hat, scarf, bag — and then that was finished," she continues. "But I couldn't settle because my mind hadn't got a mission. I have to say that shopping is the most important thing in my life and gives me a real sense of purpose. Although I hate the fact that I can't break the habit, if I honest I don't want to. Where else would I get so much pleasure and satisfaction?"

Mary is not in debt, although she has spent several thousand pounds of her savings in the past few years to pay off credit cards. Dr Elliott says shopping is a healthier addiction than tranquillisers or alcohol and only becomes a real problem if debts become insurmountable.

For many, the best cure is simply to confess they have a problem. "The first thing addictive shoppers should do is discuss their problems, maybe with a debt counsellor or someone at a Citizens Advice Bureau," Ms Eccles says. "Often when shopaholics come clean, their partners are much more sympathetic than they expected them to be." She advises anyone concerned to contact the Oxford investigation, which can help to put addicts in touch with the appropriate counsellors.

There is still a long way to go, however, before doctors realise that shopping can be as addictive as alcohol, overeating or gambling. "Women are expected to shop too much," Ms Eccles says. "We would be worried if we saw a woman tipping from the sherry bottle or going in and out of casinos. But who would give a second glance to one who is wandering around town with half a dozen carrier bags and a big smile on her face?"

● Sue Eccles can be contacted c/o School of Management Studies, University of Oxford, The Radcliffe Infirmary, Woodstock Road, Oxford OX2 6HE.

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Stepping out: Sylvie Guillem, the Royal Ballet's superstar, talks about her new television series.

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The star who could be a menace

John Grigg on the Princess who refuses to abdicate

The Queen's letters to the Prince and Princess of Wales are somewhat reminiscent of the ultimatums sent by the Eden Government to Egypt and Israel during the Suez crisis in 1956. The purported objective then was to "separate the combatants", though the true aim was to humiliate Nasser, Egypt and Israel were fighting because there had been a collusive agreement with Britain and France that Israel should advance towards the Suez Canal, so providing a pretext for Anglo-French intervention.

In the present situation, the Queen's desire to separate the combatants is unquestionably genuine. The conflict between them has in no way been fomented or exploited by her. Nevertheless, there are disquieting analogies. The Princess of Wales's *Panorama* interview, and her subsequent change of plan about staying at Sandringham for Christmas, seemed to have had an effect comparable with Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company. The Queen appears to have been provoked into sending her letters urging a step which the Prince can be said to have taken, but to which the Princess has very recently declared herself opposed.

No doubt the Queen's prime motive is to end the scandal of public competition and re-competition, with all the pain it must be causing the couple's children and all the damage it is inflicting on the monarchy. But it is also true that the Queen has a specific reason for wishing to bring about a divorce. So long as the marriage is formally in existence, the Princess would automatically become Queen if there were to be what is politely called a demise of the Crown. That is a development that the Queen and the Prince must be at one in wishing to prevent. It would be difficult enough for him to do his job as King with his estranged wife appealing to multitudes at home and abroad as "Queen of Hearts". But if she were titular Queen as well, his position would be scarcely tolerable.

In her interview, the Princess said that it was for the sake of her sons that she was reluctant to contemplate divorce. But it is hard to take this explanation seriously. If her sons' feelings and interests had been her top priority, it is inconceivable that she could have promoted Andrew Morton's book, as she now admits she did (having denied it at the time). It is also inconceivable that she could have given the *Panorama* interview.

The public exposure of her marital problems was started by her, though the Prince disastrously followed her example. Not content to leave it at that, she has now spoken directly (no longer by proxy) in the most provocative manner. Whatever her motives, they cannot have much to do with the welfare of her sons.

She is certainly playing hard to get rid of. Indeed, she must know that she cannot be got rid of, in the sense of ceasing to count and fading

from the scene. She is a star personality with an immensely strong position, of which she is well aware. If there is to be a divorce, she can more or less dictate the terms.

The Queen is seeking to force the issue at a very odd moment. Quite apart from the unsuitability of Christmas as a time for raising the practical implications of a major family quarrel, she is challenging the Princess at a time when the Princess is riding high. Rightly or wrongly, the public has more sympathy for her than for her husband, and her *Panorama* coup, far from weakening her, has manifestly strengthened her hand.

If she were to maintain her opposition to a divorce, the Prince could obtain one now only by initiating court proceedings, which he might well be unwilling to face. The Queen's authority would then have been deployed to no immediate effect. If, after all, the Princess does agree to a divorce now, she is in a position to demand not only a great deal of money, but confirmation of her royal status for the rest of her life, whether or not she remarries.

Even then the problem she poses will not go away. Divorce would rule her out as Queen Consort, but would do nothing to resolve the underlying problem, which is personal rather than constitutional.

The Princess became a star because she joined the Royal Family, and her star quality will always depend, in part, upon her royal status. But having created her as a star, the British monarchy cannot now un-create her. All concerned, including particularly the Queen and her Prime Ministers (present and future) will have to handle her in such a way as to turn her star quality to good account, while guarding against the harm she is capable of doing.

Despite her outstanding talents, she is a potential menace, because she refuses to act within the spirit of the constitution as it applies to the Royal Family. During the 1936 Abdication crisis, Edward VIII — another star figure — asked the Prime Minister, Baldwin, for permission to state his case directly to the people. Baldwin declined, and the King accepted the decision and did not broadcast until after the Abdication.

The Princess of Wales is different. She did not ask for permission to make her direct appeal, and has no intention of "abdication". She is prepared, if necessary, to divide public opinion and so impair one of the monarchy's vital functions. Some of her remarks on *Panorama* also suggested that she was determined to stop her husband becoming King.

Constitutionally, she has no power to do this. But there are other forms of power that she can wield, so long as she retains her hold on the public imagination. We can only hope that the Queen will live and reign for many more years, and that meanwhile, either the Princess or the public view of her will change.



Only they can decide

Was the Queen well-advised to write insisting on a divorce?

One sees with alarm the rallying of the old men. The Queen's letter on divorce has certainly rallied them; every old man within reach of a microphone could be heard saying what a good letter it was, how necessary the divorce had become, how little divorce mattered in terms of the constitution or the Church of England, how wise it was to bring things to a head, and so on. Until I heard the old men talking, I might have accepted some of these statements of opinion. But then I thought: "They have never been right before: why should they be right now?"

Of course, one can have every sympathy with the Queen's position. She has had to put up with more than enough. When marriages break up, people never behave particularly well — there is too much pain for that. Neither the Prince nor the Princess of Wales has behaved well. The Queen, who has behaved well herself, has suffered; she has also seen her two grandsons suffer, and she naturally wants to bring that to an end. She has to protect the interests of the monarchy; the public feud between the Prince and Princess has inevitably affected public attitudes towards the Royal Family. One cannot fault the Queen's intentions. It is the possible consequences of her letter on which she might have had better advice.

In his Dimpleby interview, the Prince of Wales implied that he had married the Princess only because his parents had said that he should. Now he receives a letter from his mother, who is also his monarch, saying that he should divorce his wife, from whom he has been separated for three years. That puts him in an unfavourable light. A man who marries because his parents tell him to, and then, 14 years later, divorces because his parents tell him to, does not seem to be taking his decisions for himself.

In her *Panorama* interview, the Princess said that she did not wish to be divorced, but that it was a decision for her husband. She also accused the Palace officials and her husband's other friends of ganging up against her, an accusation which was immediately confirmed by the blistering attack on her supposed paranoia by Nicholas Soames on *Newsnight*. Now we have the Queen's letter, which urgently demands that there be a divorce. Before the Princess has replied, on a matter which requires some consultation, this is somehow leaked to the press. It is reported that

the Prince has already agreed, and that the Prime Minister and Archbishop of Canterbury support the divorce. The Princess has her own solicitor, who seems already to have gone on his Christmas holiday, but she has been given no official support in responding to so crucial a demand. Nothing could have done more to strengthen the impression the Princess gave on *Panorama* of a lonely young woman facing all the firepower of the Establishment, in fact, John Major has been genuinely kind to her; like the Queen, he has refused to join the meet of the Buckingham Palace hounds: like the Queen, he genuinely comes well out of a sad business. But the impression is of the armoured division of the Establishment putting down the heroine of the local resistance.

After all that has gone before, it is an impression that ought to have been avoided. The Palace machine did not look after the Princess of Wales when she was a young wife; it became hostile to her while her marriage was breaking up; it still seems hostile to her now. That is what she says, and it is what most of the public believes.

There is another reason for concern about the form of the Queen's letter. Divorce is one of the great evils of our time, and one which has hit the Royal Family particularly hard. The Queen is the monarch of the Church of England, which, despite its ambivalence, is opposed in principle to divorce. The Queen has nothing to gain by committing herself to the demand that there should be a divorce. She appears to be condoning divorce as such. It might have been wiser, whatever was said in private, to leave the public decision entirely to her son.

The Prince has responded to his wife's expression of doubt about whether he would ever become King by letting it be known that he does not intend to remarry. He is committing himself to put the Crown first. That is wise, because the future of his relationship with Mrs Parker Bowles would inevitably have become the subject of endless damaging gossip and speculation. If he had decided to

marry her, that would have been controversial, and it is a controversy the Crown can well do without.

The sad thing is that the Royal Family needed the very different qualities of the Prince and Princess. In retrospect, quite apart from the other difficulties of their marriage, their temperaments were very different, perhaps too far apart for them to live easily together whatever their station in life had been. He is a serious-minded, conscientious, somewhat introverted man, with intellectual tastes. She is also serious-minded, but in a much more extroverted way, perhaps just as clever as him, both quick and bright-minded but not at all intellectual in her tastes. If they had both been born in ordinary middle-class families, one can

imagine that he might have ended up as a senior and respected academic, and she might have built up her own business, perhaps in the world of fashion. She would have been a success. They would certainly not have married.

Royalty needs his qualities, just as the Royal Family benefited from similar attributes when Albert was Prince Consort. Seriousness is a good thing in princes; an interest in ideas is a good thing too, and perhaps a rather rare one. The British monarchy has too often shown the cheerful indifference to things of the mind of the early Georges. Yet relatively introverted intellectuals find it easier to win respect than to reach for the hearts of the people. That has been the gift of the Princess, as it has also been of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. Both of them are remarkable women who know how to play the crowd, having both real warmth and histrionic skills.

As he is going to be King, it is Prince Charles whose future life will be most significant in historical terms. He has brought more of his troubles on himself than he would like to admit, but that is true of most people. He made, no doubt, the initial big mistake of the marriage, as was shown by his fatal slip when he spoke

about love — "whatever that means". His friends have allowed themselves, almost unforgivably, to form a hostile group against his wife. He should have put a stop to that. But he is a man of real virtues and character, and will serve the nation well.

Perhaps it is natural for the Princess to doubt his capacity for kingship, but I do not think the public doubt it. Nor would the public think it fair to Prince William to pass the monarchy straight on to him from his grandmother. He will have some psychological convalescence to go through as well. I think that Prince Charles's personal standing may well start to recover when he has put the divorce behind him. That is the best thing about forcing the issue now: as he grows older, he may well grow more popular.

The Queen has been a wonderfully good Queen, full of a sense of duty and honour, an admirable person whose qualities the public rightly admires. She has been put in an intolerable position, and there can be no human criticism for her wishing to resolve it. The trouble is that it cannot be resolved from outside by anybody, not even by her. There are decisions to be made, and they can be made only by the people immediately responsible for them, that is by the Prince and Princess of Wales. The Prince has to take his own decisions and be seen to take them. If he had decided that he wanted a divorce, the Princess would have had to decide on what terms she was prepared to agree to it; in working that out, she should have been given the fullest official support, which even now does not seem to be provided.

The Princess of Wales herself is, as she said on *Panorama*, not going to go away. She is the mother of the heir to the throne; for better or worse, she is an international superstar on the scale of Jackie Kennedy; she is now a smart and at times ruthless public operator: like most women, she has an unforgiving side to her nature, and has been given plenty of injuries not to forgive; she has compassion, warmth, glamour, shrewdness, calculation and strength. She will continue to have her public, whether or not she has a satisfactory public role. Both the Prince and the Princess of Wales are indeed tragic and injured figures in their own ways, but only they can resolve the drama in which they are involved. They still have to settle their own destinies, she hers, and he his.

Philip Howard



They may not fly, but they certainly do inspire

What do you expect from a pig but a grunt? In *Babe*, the cult film for Christmas, what you get is a cute voice squeaking. The eponymous hero's personal pig-trainer for the film used 48 piglets in shifts of six, because they kept on growing out of the role. He motivated them with bribes of food. Once one little pig's stomach was full, he had to call up an undersorter. Unconventionally, they were all females (gilt, in swine and City jargon), as is obvious when they turn away from the camera. The camera, and probably the townee viewer, zoomed in on the wiles and dangling parts. Dog looks up to man. Cat looks down on him. The pig is the only animal that looks him straight in the eye as an equal, pig to pig.

The film is charming. The animal behaviour and elocution are miraculous. *Babe* is sentimental where the book was dry, and such interpolations by the screenwriters as a trio of singing mice are twee Disney whimsy. The setting has been removed from the hard North Yorkshire dales to a candy-floss mid-Atlantic Arcadia, though this is happily named Kingsmith County.

For the original text, *The Sheep-Pig*, was by Dick King-Smith, and it is one of the ten best stories for children ever written. The other nine include *The Jungle Book*, *The Hobbit*, *Centipede*, *Pook's Hill*, *The Aliens* (whose Freudian ambiguities are better appreciated by adults), and *Charlotte's Web*, which is also about a piglet escaping the common fate of pigs.

For the pig is the unlikely hero of the hour. Christmas television is littered with them. In Alan Bennett's *A Private Function* last night, a pig was the clandestine agent of the plot in raton-stricken Britain. Coming up from the back of the schedule are *Leon the Pig Farmer* (a Jewish boy discovers his life is descended from a long line of Howards or Hogwards), *The Hour of the Pig* (a pig on trial for murder), the large Black in *Wodehouse's Heavy Weather*, and *Animal Farm* (Snowball, Squealer and Napoleon star in the pig as natural Stalinists).

From Fligging Bland and Miss Pealoids to Pinky and Perky and Roldo Dahl's evil pig, they also serve literature who only stand and swill. Although they did not make it to the manger at Bethlehem, pigs have more than trotted on parts in the Bible. The suicidal Cadarene swine learnt that Christ was no animal rights zealot, and the Prodigal Son's envy of the hussies that the swine did eat inspired pig-meat from Poussin to Murrill. André Gide and Darius Milhaud collaborated in a work for voices and orchestra about the prodigal among the swine. Prokofiev used the story for a ballet, *Ponchikoff* for an opera.

The fashion for the Vietnamese Pot-Bellied Pig as a pet has brought fresh acrimony to celebrity divorce. Pigs play their part in the first romance of literature, as the obvious creatures for wicked witches to turn human beings into. And when Odysseus finally gets home after 20 years, where does he go to find out what has been going on? To the pigs and their faithful pigman, of course. There is also the first sympathetic portrait of dog as man's second best friend rather than scavenger of battlefield bodies. Thirty centuries on, *Babe* repeats this primal theme of faithful dog and the semi-human pig.

When Walter Scott wants to create a medieval atmosphere, he brings on swineheads and swine, munching the mast of the forest trees. Mythology is rich with pigs, as monstrous beasts to be slain as a test or to give a hero a Freudian wound with their tusks. Romulus and Remus may have been suckled by a wolf, suitably for the future cruelty of their city, but Jupiter was suckled by a pig. There is Gravenstein archetypal symbolism about the fertility of the pig, and the lesson he taught men about turning up the earth for food.

Now that nitrogen-enhanced grain-farming is so prolific, there is more land available for pigs. It is a pleasure to see them rooting and wallowing outside their little cabins in the open air again, instead of caged in dark factories. And, because of the BSE scare, pork prices have reached their highest peak for years. There is more to a pig than roast pork with crackling and apple sauce. But there is not much that is better. *The Sheep-Pig* is.

Beeb boob

THERE HAS been little sign of festive cheer at the BBC between the Corporation's Chairman, Marjorie Huxley, and its Director-General, John Birt. Huxley was conspicuously absent from Birt's extravagant Christmas party, one of an endless series of BBC bashes held at the taxpayers' expense in the council chamber of the Corporation's White City headquarters.

His absence was galling enough, but to add to Birt's woes Huxley was the life and soul at another bash in the council chamber, held this week by Birt's deputy, Bob Phillips.

Guests at Birt's party included Lords Callaghan and Runcie as well as some whose best years are behind them, such as Professor Eric Hobsbawm, the Marxist historian. Phillips pulled in a bunch which included Prince Edward (sporting a "Prince Edward" name-tag), Charles Anson and David Puttnam as well as Huxley. "Bob's party guests were a cut above John's," said an insider.

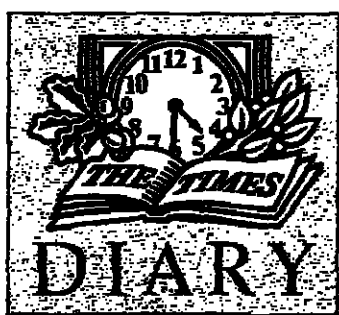
Relations between Birt and Huxley have been strained for some time. The Chairman and his board of governors censured the DG after the law courts banned the

BBC from screening an interview with John Major just before the local elections in the spring. And Huxley, whose wife, Lady Susan, is a lady-in-waiting to the Queen, was fearfully embarrassed by the *Panorama* interview with the Princess of Wales.

Anybody who marries a god-daughter of the Queen needs to



"Does the Queen of Hearts still count as royalty?"



mug up on royal protocol, as Jeremy Brudenell discovered when he was courting his wife, Edwina Hicks, who is grand-daughter of the late Earl Mountbatten. Prior to her 18th birthday party, Jeremy kept practising "Good evening, Ma'am" in anticipation of meeting Her Majesty, and clearly overdid it. "When I got to Prince Philip, I gave a bow and said 'Good evening, Ma'am' to him too. I didn't dare look up to see his reaction," he told the sycophantic glossy Hello!

Second serve

BJORN BORG is bouncing back. After a glorious tennis career followed by mixed success as a businessman, he is now big in knickers. A Bjorn Borg underwear store has opened in Chelsea.

Borg wound up his design label some years ago, but a Stockholm businessman, Anders Arnborger, bought the licence to use his name and now one of Scandinavia's most popular underwear lines is over here. The "young and sporty" outfits are being promoted by photographs of naked Swedes frolicking in the snow.

"Bjorn will be over in the new year for a party at the shop," says Arnborger. "We aim to uncover one of the myths about the Swedes — we do wear underwear."

A deux

THE PRINCE and Princess of Wales will join a select band of royal divorcees if their separation is formalised. Only three Princesses of Wales failed to become Queen: Joan the Fair Maid of Kent, wife of the Black Prince, who died a lingering death before he could take the throne; Clementina, whose husband James Stuart (the Old Pretender) was exiled after the Glorious Revolution; and Augusta, who watched Frederick, son of George II, die from pleurisy, after being hit by a cricket ball, before he could succeed.

Furthermore, George I, the last divorced man to take the throne, took mistresses while still living in Hanover but immediately incar-



Imran and Jemima: out clubbing

cerated his wife, Sophia Dorothea, when he heard of her adultery.

Khan do

THAT ageing sex symbol of the cricket world, Imran Khan, was up to his old tricks in the early hours yesterday. He took his new and beautiful wife Jemima to a disco. Along with Liz Hurley and her pal Henry Brocklehurst (Hugh Grant was nowhere to be seen), the glam-

orous couple pitched up at Monte's nightclub in Sloane Street. All four had enjoyed supper together at a restaurant close by. They arrived with other friends after 1 am in two limousines, at the club where the Prince of Wales's skiing friend Tara Palmer-Tomkinson threw a party last week. There were unconfirmed reports that the former cricketer showed his prowess on the dancefloor.

P.H.S



ROYAL WISDOM

The Queen has set an example to the Prince and Princess

When the Princess of Wales demanded "clarity" about the future of her marriage last month, she can scarcely have imagined that it would be so decisively produced. The Queen's letters to her eldest son and his wife, urging them to press ahead with divorce as soon as possible, have ended the futile stand-off between the royal couple. Her action heralds a potentially civilised end to their festering disagreement. It was a brave, wise and firm act, worthy of a long-serving and beloved monarch.

In her interview with BBC's *Panorama*, the Princess said that she would await her husband's judgment on whether they should divorce. The Prince has now indicated that he agrees with his mother's advice that a settlement should be reached sooner rather than later. Yesterday he went further, announcing that he had no intention of remarrying. There may be fresh uncertainties ahead. But the constitutional landscape has not looked so settled since the separation of the Prince and Princess was announced three years ago.

Those who believe that the Queen's intervention was an act of vengeance against her daughter-in-law should think again. They should consider what it costs a mother to write formally to her son and his wife to advise them to divorce. The Queen has watched three of her children suffer failed marriages. For Her Majesty to tackle the problem of the Prince and Princess as she did was an act of immense courage. It has made possible an end to the sparring between the two — a process of attack and counter-attack which could have continued indefinitely. Last year, the Prince admitted that he had committed adultery. Last month, the Princess said she too had been unfaithful and insinuated that she considered her husband unfit to rule. It will no longer be so easy for this public squabble to continue.

The moral gauntlet has been thrown before the Prince and Princess, in the interests of the monarchy and the realm.

The Prince has made his position clear. He wants a divorce now. But he has indicated his preparedness to forswear personal happiness in the interests of constitutional peace. This would be a sacrifice of no small proportions. His estranged wife must now consider her options. The lawyers on both sides have already gone to work. What matters most is that her children's interests are safeguarded and that she finds her own role in the life of the nation. If she decides upon a swift divorce, it is vital that the case never go to court. For the sake of the institution and also for that of their children, it must be resolved with the minimum of fuss and as much dignity as can be salvaged from such a tragic misfortune. That implies public reticence on both sides.

As to the ambassadorial role which the Princess covets, the wheels of government are already turning. Divorced or not, the Princess remains one of the Royal Family's international assets. She should be free to employ her talents to the fullest extent, without reproach or recrimination. She wants to serve the nation, and should be allowed to do so.

The Princess is entitled to postpone her decision for a while but should not delay too long. The support of the Prime Minister and the Archbishop of Canterbury for the Queen's letter was highly significant. They have reflected a general desire for resolution, for an end to this unhappy royal chapter. The fairy-tale marriage long ago went sour. It has withered into something sad and unforgiving, offering sensation to millions and joy to no one. The Queen has offered the prospect of a release. The hand she has stretched out should be grasped with gratitude and relief.

LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

The future of Christ's birthplace

The tumultuous celebrations in Bethlehem that greeted the withdrawal of Israeli troops yesterday will continue throughout Christmas — the first that the Palestinians in the holy city have celebrated after 28 years of Israeli occupation. Until only a few days ago, the promised pullout was on hold, pending the completion of a road to a nearby Israeli settlement. The delay provoked accusations that the Israelis were deliberately stalling in order to spoil the Palestinians' Christmas. Keenly aware of the danger of provoking fresh bitterness, the Israelis hastened to complete the road and pull out their troops on time. Their withdrawal is one of the most hopeful signs that the spirit of reconciliation is to be the guiding principle of the Peres Government.

Not all Jews share the Prime Minister's determination to fulfil his country's promises under the Middle East peace accords. A former Chief Rabbi has issued the emotive order to all Israelis, including soldiers, to "rend their clothes" in a sign of ritual mourning. He and other right-wingers view the withdrawal as "Judea in its destruction", a betrayal, they believe, of the Jewish right to the lands of Judea and Samaria. The controversial decrees underline the deep split in Israeli society that the peace process is now engendering — a split that will be revealed in all its bitterness when, and if, more of the murky details of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin come to light during the trial next month of Yigal Amir, the self-confessed assassin.

The Israeli pullout is a visible change. Another less obvious exodus, however, has been changing the little town for more than a generation: the emigration of its Christians. For nearly two thousand years Bethlehem had been a centre of Christianity in the

Middle East; until 1950 the Christians were still the dominant majority. Elias Freij, the far-sighted and moderate Mayor, is himself a Christian who has upheld the rights of all Bethlehem's inhabitants, Christian and Muslim, during the difficult years of occupation. Now, however, he is a lone voice. Family by family, the Christians have left — for Australia, the United States and Latin America, where the Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Roman Catholic, Protestant and Maronite Arabs have sought new homes.

The pattern is being repeated all over the region. The ancient Christian churches are empty, the famous families dispersed and the Christian presence, once sizeable in Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Palestine, is now down to a mere 2 or 3 per cent of the population. The reasons range from the loss of privilege by families who once exercised huge influence in business and politics, to the determination to get ahead by Western-orientated young people and the growing pressure of Islamic fundamentalism.

Tensions between Muslims and Christians in the region are growing, exacerbated by the long Lebanese civil war, the Palestinian intifada, the rise of Islamic radicalism and the assumption by the outside world that the Arab world is uniformly Muslim. Moderate Muslims regret the exodus; Christianity has long shaped the region: indeed, the founders of the Arab nationalist movement during the Ottoman Empire were Christians. No one wants Bethlehem to be the museum site of a vanished faith. Only a living, indigenous Christian community can keep alive the cradles of the faith — a community whose contribution is all the more valuable now that Palestinians have a chance to run their own affairs.

BODY POLITICS

Ways to improve the human form

"You are wonderful!" gushes the advertisement for a private healthcare company, extolling the myriad design features of the human body. Extraordinary as the engineering of veins, bones, brain cells and taste buds may be, the mechanism seems to improve frustratingly slowly. If the human body were a car, it would have been honed almost to perfection by now: rarely breaking down, bristling with extras, and equipped with an onboard computer. As it is, we have to wait hundreds of thousands of years for evolution to take its course.

But what if a "mark 2 human genome" could be brought into being? After all, prototypes always suffer from design faults; they could surely be ironed out in subsequent versions. This week's issue of the *British Medical Journal* proffers a second draft of God's cosmic design. Second children should be born first as they are less likely to die and benefit from more experienced parents. Children should be born to grandparents, who have more time, patience, money and practice. The brain should be located in the chest, where it would be better protected, and our eyes should protrude from the shoulders on retractable stalks like those of snails. Next to them on the right shoulder should be an area which changes colour according to sexual receptiveness: rape could then be redefined as crashing a red light.

The worst designed parts of the human body are those used for reproduction. Most

women would come up with an instant checklist: painless childbirth, nausea-free pregnancy, less frequent menstruation and — like other animals — predictable fertile times. Men would be relieved to have the more vulnerable parts of their anatomy hidden in a safer place.

But there are many other functions that seem to serve no useful purpose. First, you could abolish the appendix. Next, invent a switch that makes hair and nails grow only when you want them to. Baldies could rehash; men could save years of their life by not shaving. Metabolisms ought to be tuneable to suit the appetites of their host bodies.

Ask any child how the human body could be improved and the answers are fascinatingly similar. Eyes in the back of your head, or able to see round corners or in the dark; super-sensitive ears that can detect a whisper from a hundred paces. But while we could each individually benefit from enhanced senses, do we want others to overhear our secret conversations or look through our curtains? The best enhancement for the human race as a whole would be a halving in our size. At a stroke, we would need less food and water, smaller houses and cars, fewer natural resources and less space. Armed with a gun, man no longer needs his size to protect himself against natural predators. As Hugo Brown suggests in the *BMJ*, "downsizing" is "a small price to pay for saving humankind from itself".

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Taking a look beyond the violence and riots of Brixton

From Mr Lee Jasper and others

Sir, We, members of a group of Asians, blacks and Jews, are concerned at the way in which the recent events in Brixton have been reported in most media.

The immense sense of anger and frustration felt by the black and Asian communities is largely ignored. By our calculations, the death of Wayne Douglas (reports, December 14, 15, 21, later editions) brings to 52 the number of black men who have died in police custody since 1984. They have been mainly young men, none yet even charged with any offence.

In none of these cases has any individual police officer been charged, despite some cases in which coroners' courts have returned verdicts of unlawful killing. No officers have been reprimanded and no apologies made.

During the last ten years at least £4 million of taxpayers' money has been used for out-of-court settlements of claims, mainly by black men, for wrongful arrests, assaults and planting of drugs. All payments were made at the very last moment in cases brought against the police, following earlier cases against the alleged suspects that were thrown out for lack of, or contradictory, evidence.

Particularly disturbing for members of the British black community is the sense of a different response to murders of black people compared to white. A string of cases seem to have been pursued by the police with little vigour when the victims were black, compared to the rapid arrest, charging and conviction after the tragic death of the young white boy, Richard Everett (report, October 6).

None of this background justifies incitement to violence. It does suggest the need for an immediate independent investigation.

Yours,
LEE JASPER,
YASMIN ALIBHAI-BROWN,
JANE JACOBS,
Black Jewish Forum,
33 Seymour Place, W1,
December 21.

From Mr John Booth

Sir, The reference by Councillor Elphicke, in his letter of December 20, to the "failure" by Brixton Challenge

to encourage local entrepreneurs and business start-ups, is less than fair.

Brixton Challenge was set up in 1993 (not 1985) in order to manage a five-year regeneration programme for the Brixton area, with core funding of a £37.5 million "city challenge" government grant. It has already invested over £78 million of combined public and private-sector finance into environmental improvements, crime prevention and control initiatives, new housing, training, small businesses, retail and commercial development, new entertainment, community and leisure facilities and healthcare.

As a vital part of this programme we have supported about 120 new business start-ups, undertaken extensive refurbishment of small business premises, allocated grants for improvements to local shopfronts, set up a business support centre and given funds for community businesses.

This programme will continue, in collaboration with other local regeneration agencies. Events such as those last week cannot be ignored, but we must not lose sight of the long-term regeneration plan that will enhance the everyday lives of those who live, work in and visit Brixton and which will attract further investment. The future of Brixton has not "gone up in smoke", as Councillor Elphicke puts it.

Yours etc,
JOHN BOOTH
(Chair),
Brixton Challenge Company Ltd,
44 Brixton Road, SW9,
December 20.

From Mrs Annabel Geddes

Sir, In 1971, then aged 32, I was seeking premises in London in which to set up an innovative tourist enterprise. The premises I found were in Tooley Street, SE1, and belonged to British Rail; they were totally derelict — no electricity, water or drainage — and had been empty since 1966.

Over the next four years I received nothing but sympathetic help from the National Westminster Bank, to whom I had applied for capital, the district surveyor, the artists, designers and builders whom we commissioned, and from the British Rail Property Board, which allowed us long rent-free periods whilst we tried to get going.

Rail privatisation

From Mr Roland Hummerston

Sir, Whatever the future under privatisation (report and leading article, December 16), the level of rail services provided in many parts of the country has already been reduced during the current year. My local line, for example, has seen a reduction from a half hourly service to Cambridge to one train an hour for much of the off-peak period.

In addition, the level of service has been reduced on some rural services by a reduction in seating capacity from a multiple unit to a single-coach train.

Yet again passengers are being deterred from using the railways by the imposition of the latest exorbitant and arbitrary fare increase. It seems doubtful that the principle of fragmentation and the regime imposed by the Government relating to the leasing of rolling stock do not serve the interests of the rail user as well as an integrated national rail network, and will not provide the better services we are promised.

Yours faithfully,
R. HUMMERSTON,
11 Lansdowne Court, Churchfields,
Bloxdown, Hertfordshire,
December 18.

From Mr John B. Harris

Sir, I travelled north by train last week, buying my ticket the previous day. I had to go on the 8.30am so I could not take advantage of the reduced fare, which applies only from 9.30am.

Barbie and the boys

From Ms Lucy Lloyd

Sir, Nigella Lawson in her article on Barbie of December 12, "What Barbie tells us about ourselves", described her daughter's thrilled acceptance of a doll. What we should remember is that little boys love dolls, too. But if they want a doll they usually have to steal one from their sister or playmate.

My 2½-year-old loves his big sister's Barbies. When I asked a relative to give him a doll for Christmas, she cringed and said "Would a teddy be all right instead?". Yet we want our boys to grow into loving and caring men able to share the care of their home and children.

Playing is learning for life. Let boys have dolls. They can still be "rowdy males".

Yours sincerely,
LUCY LLOYD
(Information and Development Officer),
Daycare Trust, 4 Wild Court, WC2,
December 12.

Business letters, page 23
Sports letters, page 31

With the postal delays that often occur at this time of year, it is useful, where possible, for letters to be faxed to 0171-782 5046. Please give contact telephone numbers.

Time to reflect on 'no fault' divorce

From the Right Reverend Lord Haldane

Sir, It would appear from your recent correspondence (letters, November 2, 7, 11, 17; December 12, 13) that there is still much confusion on the subject of no-fault divorce. I suspect it is the label "no fault" which causes more problems than the actual procedure proposed in the Family Law Bill.

It might be helpful, therefore, to distinguish between the reasons for divorce, which almost always entail fault by one or both of the parties, and the grounds on which divorce should be granted, namely irretrievable breakdown.

Matrimonial offences may be among the main reasons for breakdown but, if the breakdown is not complete, only a very superficial view of marriage would hold that an offence by itself is a sufficient ground for divorce. The point at issue is how a couple cope when an offence has been committed, not whether a single action is all that is needed to break a marriage.

Estimates of fault may, and in my opinion should, play a part in the process of agreeing any settlement. Furthermore, the clause in the Bill which enables the court to postpone or disallow a divorce is an important safeguard against wilful exploitation of one party by the other. This clause is also a necessary reminder that divorce is never solely dependent on the will of one or both of the parties, but remains a judicial decision.

This is not divorce by consent, and the Bill preserves the present understanding of marriage, insofar as any divorce Bill can do so. However the unfortunate label "no fault" continues to give the impression of moral indifference to divorce; and some critics also claim that it undermines the notion of there being clearly defined responsibilities within marriage.

Surely the main responsibility a married couple have towards each other is to maintain and develop their relationship. Irretrievable breakdown is thus significant evidence of moral failure. The fact that blame is not assigned between them signals that, although their culpability may differ, the breakdown is a failure for both.

A Bill which allows a couple time to reflect on whether this breakdown is what it appears to be, and to face its practical implications, seems to me to get much nearer the moral heart of the matter than the present law, which is scandalous both for its superficiality and for the speed at which some divorces can be processed.

I am thus at a loss to understand why those who are critical of moral relativism, as I am myself, seem so keen to maintain the status quo.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN HALDANE,
18 The Mount,
Malton, North Yorkshire,
December 19.

Less Moore

From Mr Craig Sams

Sir, Loud cheers resounded round our breakfast table upon my reading out your Diary item today that the Henry Moore "chicken bone" sculpture is finally to be removed from its position. On our daily stroll in Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park we have for years either averted our eyes or planned a route that avoids passing within sight of *The Arch*.

The Royal Parks are doing a splendid job of restoring the landscape design of Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park. The original creators of the magnificent vista from Kensington Palace towards London would surely have been dismayed by the intrusive appearance of Moore's unusually unapproachable piece of stone.

The site should now be left clear, and the sculpture given back to the Henry Moore Foundation to seek a happier home for it. A work of art requires an appropriate setting and this one is surely more suited to a windswept inner-city housing estate or to the City headquarters of a banking multinational than to the reflective and leafy environs of the Long Water.

Yours sincerely,
CRAIG SAMs,
269 Portobello Road, W11,
December 13.

From Mrs Sue Law

Sir, Can we all have a rest from Henry Moore's sculpture now that nature has decreed that it is to become an *Arch* divided?

What an opportunity for other sculptors to have their work appreciated by thousands of people in Hyde Park. A display which changed, perhaps every year, could be financed by the "tens of thousands of pounds" saved by not restoring the Moore.

Yours sincerely,
SUE LAW,
The Gallery, 17 North Street,
Winchcombe, Gloucestershire.

World of their own

From Mr Rodney Legg

Sir, It comes as no surprise that Mr Salih has located another planet (report, December 11). I know a number of the people who live there.

Yours sincerely,
RODNEY LEGG,
National School,
North Street, Wincanton, Somerset,
December 11.

OBITUARIES

HILTON CLARKE

Hilton Clarke, CBE, former principal of the Discount Office at the Bank of England, died on December 6 aged 86. He was born on April 1, 1909.

HILTON CLARKE was the Bank of England's eyes and ears. As head of the Discount Office for 13 years he supervised the business of banking in the City. Few men who mattered in that famous Square Mile did not know him — and fewer still were not known to Hilton Clarke. None succeeded in keeping his business secrets from him.

The Discount Office as such disappeared 16 years ago — a casualty of the 1979 Banking Act. This introduced statutory controls and regulations in response to the 1973-74 secondary banking crisis. But control was exerted in Clarke's day by "moral suasion". With just two other senior staff and a dozen juniors, he administered the profession's code of ethics with a quiet discretion.

Two City banks collapsed during his time, an event which today would have sent shockwaves through Parliament. But Clarke's pair of hands was so safe that public confidence at home and abroad remained unshaken. Although his department was small, Clarke's job was among the most senior in the Bank, giving him direct personal access to the Governor. No banking institution opened in London without its head paying Clarke a courtesy call, for guidance on the City's "do's and don'ts".

He was commonly known in the Bank as the "Governor's eyebrows": a quizzical stare or a frown — and the message got through. He could also be tough when required. When Indian bank bills refused to accept Pakistani bank bills during the 1960s Indo-Pakistani War, he summoned the heads of the Indian banks to his office. Unless they changed their tune within the hour, Clarke bluntly told them, he would have all their branches closed down by lunchtime that day. They did not argue.

Hilton Swift Clarke, whom some regarded as one of the Bank's most influential figures of the last 75 years, was the son of a Liverpool dockworker. It was Hilton's father, a timber merchant, who moved the family south early this century when he opened a new office in London.

Born at Harrow-on-the-Hill, the young Clarke went to Highgate School where he won all the mathematics prizes and showed an equal aptitude for art. From there he went on to art college with a view to pursuing a career in that direction. But his father, being a practical north countryman, insisted that he get a "proper job". So he joined the Bank of England at the age of 17 and was sent



to its Birmingham branch as a junior clerk.

Described as "promising" in early reports, Hilton Clarke had by 1938 climbed his way into the Governor's office as assistant to Montagu Norman's private secretary. Then the Second World War broke out. Clarke prepared to join HM Forces, along with his Bank of England contemporaries.

But on visiting the recruiting office he discovered that the Bank had slapped a "reserved occupation" tag on him. So he joined the Home Guard in Windsor, where he lived, and was given command of an anti-aircraft unit in Windsor Great Park, guarding Windsor Castle.

He narrowly escaped with his life in the London Blitz. One day when

his train was delayed he arrived late at the Bank to find that a bomb had just scored a direct hit on his desk. He frequently slept in the Bank when air raids prevented him from getting home by train. One night he and a colleague, stranded en route, walked all the way from Twickenham to Windsor. They arrived at Windsor station, where they had parked their

bicycles, just in time to see a train arrive from London.

Some thought that Clarke should have been made the Bank's Chief Cashier. But in 1950 he became a deputy principal of the Discount Office and was promoted principal four years later — a post of equivalent rank to that of Chief Cashier. He retired in 1967 and two years later became the founder chairman of the Atlantic International, a small American-owned conglomerate bank in London. He was made its president eight years ago.

He was also chairman of several other companies at one time, including Astley & Pearce, the Exco International Broking Group and Charterhouse Japhet. Among the other firms whose boards he joined were United Dominions Trust, the Guthrie Corporation and the Bank of Scotland.

He was made a Freeman of the City of London and took particular pride in being elected an honorary fellow of the Royal College of General Practitioners, an honour given in recognition of his help to the college over raising funds. Nearly 6 ft tall, and taller still in his top hat, he cut an imposing figure as he strode down Threadneedle Street. He was, however, for the most part a gentle giant, an easygoing sociable man who was popular both inside and outside the Bank of England.

When interviewing other City bankers he managed to give the impression that he was being quite amazingly indiscreet, to which they responded by similarly disclosing their own confidences. It was only the following day that many realised Clarke had told them virtually nothing they did not know already, whereas they themselves had revealed more than they needed to. It was a skill which stood him in good stead for many years.

He made a point of employing the prettiest girls for the Discount Office. As it was seen as the Bank's "window" onto the City, he thought that this improved its public image.

Not only did he continue to paint throughout his life, but developed a particular skill as a cartoonist, frequently contributing to the *Old Lady*, the Bank of England's own house journal. He also spent much of his spare time in his kitchen garden, growing his own vegetables, a habit he had acquired during the war.

Clarke's first wife Sibyl, a former Bank of England clerk, died in 1975 after suffering for many years from cancer, through which Clarke devotedly nursed her. In 1984 he married his second wife Ann, also a former Bank employee, who survives him together with a son from his first marriage.

LORD JACQUES

Lord Jacques, former chairman of the Co-operative Union and a Government Whip in the House of Lords, died on December 20 aged 90. He was born on January 11, 1905.



JOHNNY JACQUES was the last survivor of a small band in the House of Lords who started their careers down the mines during the First World War. It was a distinction he shared until their deaths with Bill Blyton and Harry Taylor, both of whom had previously been Labour MPs before arriving in the Upper House. Jacques was never in the Commons but had a very active life in the Co-operative movement before being created a life peer by Harold Wilson in 1968.

John Henry Jacques was born in Ashington, Northumberland, the home town of Jack and Bobby Charlton as well as of their uncle, Jack Milburn. It was mining at the heart of Ashington, then so was "The Co-op" — at which all the miners and their families shopped. At the remarkably early age of 21 Jacques became general manager of the Moorsley Society in Co Durham. For the next 20 years he became "Mr Co-op" in the North East.

"J", as he was known by his Co-operative colleagues, went on to be a tutor at the old Co-operative College in Manchester, where he was a pioneer of what was known as management accounting (he himself had taken a BA in Commerce at Victoria College, Manchester). He remained teaching in Manchester until 1942 when he was appointed accountant to the Plymouth Co-operative Society. Three years later, in 1945, he became chief executive of the Portsea Island Co-op and spent the next twenty years building up that society until in terms of trading success it became the envy of its high street rivals.

By the early 1960s Jacques had become a focal figure in the Co-operative movement. He was president of the annual Co-operative Congress in 1961 and served as chairman of the Co-operative Union from 1964 to 1970. At this time

he even made an impression on Harold Wilson who, hearing him give a speech from a public platform, immediately recognised a kindred spirit. It was thus that he was brought to the House of Lords by the Labour Prime Minister in 1968.

At least until extreme old age overtook him, Jacques took his legislative duties very seriously. His experience and training proved very useful when, during the days of the 1974-79 Labour Government, he acted as spokesman in the Lords on behalf of Michael Foot's Department of Employment. (Technically he was what is known as a Lord-in-Waiting, or a Government Whip, but in the Lords that often involves being a maid-of-all-work.) Although diminutive in stature — his head barely reached above the dispatch box — Jacques relished debate and nearly always contrived to put up a stout defence of the Government. He had a crisp style of delivery which often proved particularly effective.

His last appearance in the House of Lords took place during the debate on the Queen's Speech last month. He then entertained to lunch the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Portsmouth — something he had regularly done for 25 years.

Lord Jacques was twice married, his first wife Constance dying in 1987. He is survived by his second wife Violet, whom he married in 1989, and by two sons and a daughter from his first marriage.

BILLY MARSH

Billy Marsh, theatrical agent, died on December 19 aged 78. He was born on June 19, 1917.

BILLY MARSH was a variety scene veteran whose astute management launched or resuscitated many a career. The roll-call of unknowns he nurtured to stardom reads like a *Who's Who* of postwar entertainment. In 1948, for example, the young and raw Norman Wisdom came to him for help. Marsh was instrumental in building him into one of the great comedians of the 1950s and 1960s.

Bruce Forsyth was also given his big break by Marsh, who booked him as a compère for *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* in 1958. He also managed Tony Hancock until his death in 1966 and guided Charlie Drake's career throughout the late 1950s and 1960s, when Drake was rarely off the television screens.

Marsh was just as skilful at turning around established stars' careers, and making them consider a new approach. In 1960 he was approached by a depressed Eric Morecambe and Ernie Wise whose careers were then in the doldrums. Marsh astutely advised them to concentrate on television and was able to fix an appearance for them on the spot.

Marsh was a shrewd man, whose years in variety, and almost three decades of association with Bernard Delfont, made him an excellent judge of popular taste. There was nothing of the frustrated actor

about him, no loud check suits, cigars, or booming voices. He had a quiet, modest manner but in the business he was known as being a shrewd negotiator.

William Rawlinson Marsh was born in Dover. His father was a farmer, but ever since he was a boy, Billy was stagestruck. He would spend much of his spare money at the Deal Hippodrome, and used to cycle to Folkestone to the Pleasure Gardens Theatre. He tried his hand at performing but quickly discovered that his real expertise lay in management. In 1938 he got a job as a dogbody with a touring show passing through Dover.

In 1941 he joined Delfont, beginning a long association with him and the Grade family. While Delfont concentrated on the production side Marsh looked after the artistes and spotted future talent. He created the lucrative summer season business in Blackpool, Bournemouth, Yarmouth and Torquay. And he introduced to American audiences such stars as Tommy Steele, Harry Secombe and Des O'Connor. He booked all the acts for the Talk of the Town.

When Delfont was bought out in 1967, Marsh formed his own theatrical agency, London Management, in partnership with Michael Grade, followed by Billy Marsh Associates in 1987. In 1990 he was the subject of *This is Your Life*, the only theatrical agent to have been thus honoured. Billy Marsh is survived by his wife, from whom he had been long separated.

THE RIGHT REV GERALD COLIN

The Right Rev Gerald Colin, Bishop of Grimsby, 1966-79, died in Norwich on December 19 aged 82. He was born on July 13, 1913.

A BIG man in every sense of the phrase, Gerald Colin was one of those parish priests who make very effective bishops. Appointed Bishop of Grimsby — one of the two suffragan sees of Lincoln — in 1966, he had by then already spent 18 years as vicar of Frodingham, the mother church of Scunthorpe and one of the diocese's more demanding parochial posts.

Through the Scunthorpe Industrial Mission, which he helped to found, he did much

to foster good relations between the churches and the then expanding steel industry. His personality lent itself to such a purpose: he was enormously bonhomous and cheerful — not for nothing was he for nearly a decade director of the Butlin's camps chaplaincy service — with more than his fair share of Irish wit.

Gerald Fitzmaurice Colin was born in Dublin of Irish parents. His father's family came from Neuchâtel, his mother was a Fitzmaurice from Co Carlow in Southern Ireland. He had a wholly Irish education, going to St Patrick's Cathedral School and Mountjoy School in Dublin before graduating from Trinity College, Dublin, with innumerable prizes. He took a first in philosophy and followed it up the following year with a first in divinity. He never had any doubt about his vocation and was made deacon on his 23rd birthday.

He served his title in the parish of Ballywillan in Northern Ireland but within 18 months had returned to Dublin where he became Chancellor's vicar (or a minor canon) of St Patrick's Cathedral. Having his own firm ideas (not shared by all his countrymen) about the menace that Nazism represented, he volunteered to join the RAF as a chaplain in 1939 — thus widening an experience that otherwise might have spent solely in the service of the Church of Ireland.

His wartime career was not without adventure. Having failed to get aboard the little ships' armada at Dunkirk, he endured some hazardous weeks making his way, largely under cover of darkness, through occupied France. He eventually escaped from Marseilles via a tug-boat carrying iron ore from Morocco, arriving at Liverpool in late August 1940.

His next posting was to be chaplain to Thorney Island, which put him in the front line of the Battle of Britain and which later also involved him in ministering to the men involved in the largely ill-fated commando raids on northern France. In 1942 he was sent to the Far East, serving first at Chittagong (now in Bangla-

desh) and then in East Bengal) and then as a senior RAF chaplain in Ceylon and southern India.

It says much for the manner in which the war had broadened his horizons that when he returned to Britain in 1946 — at first to supervise the training of prospective RAF ordinands — he should within a year have been presented by Lord St Oswald to the important living of Frodingham (though he had never served in the Church of England previously). He certainly made his mark there — becoming a Proctor in Convocation for the Lincoln diocese in 1959, rural dean of Manlike in 1960 and a canon and prebendary of Lincoln Cathedral that same year.

Eighteen years, however, is a long time to spend in one parish and it must have been with some measure of relief that Colin received Bishop Kenneth Riches's invitation in 1965 to join the episcopal staff of the diocese. He was consecrated in Southwark Cathedral on Epiphany 1966.

Colin had the reputation of possessing one of the best minds of all the Lincoln clergy and he was almost universally popular. A bad car accident in the early 1970s slowed him down somewhat and later, in his retirement in Norwich, he had been undergoing regular dialysis.

He is survived by his wife Iris, whom he married in 1941, and by three sons and two daughters.

PERSONAL COLUMN

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DR. COOK AND THE POLE.

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT)

Much surprise and disappointment was felt when it became known at noon today that the Council of Copenhagen University considered Dr. Cook's documents to be insufficient proof that he had reached the Pole, and had couched their report in such terms as to throw suspicion on the explorer's statements. Dr. Cook spent a week in Copenhagen, and made himself very popular. Every one — even astronomers — believed in him, and he received an honorary degree from the University. Public opinion was therefore not prepared for the frank statement in which the University announces the result of the inquiry.

The University's decision is the sole topic today. The principal streets are crowded and special editions of the newspapers are being eagerly bought. The evening journals subject the explorer to severe criticism, and the *Berlingske Tidende* says that after this denouement the University of Copenhagen has finished with Dr. Cook.

One of the most remarkable features of the University's decision is a statement to the effect that Dr. Cook's report to the special commission was lacking in clear information

ON THIS DAY

December 22, 1909

The American Commander Robert Peary reached the North Pole on April 21, 1909. Dr. Cook's claim that he had raised the Stars and Stripes there exactly a year earlier was proved false.

to an "inadmissible" degree. The Danish word used for "inadmissible" is *utiladelig*, which has really a much stronger meaning. This, of course, implies a censure on Dr. Cook for sending such documents to Copenhagen University.

NEW YORK AND VERDICT.

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT)

NEW YORK, DEC. 21. The Copenhagen verdict on Dr. Cook's claim is received here as final. The explorer himself, according to his brother, sailed for Naples in the *Caronia* on November 27, thence proceeded to Denmark, and is now at

Christiansand, Norway. It seems unlikely that he will return here.

The verdict was no surprise, since Dr. Cook has been practically discredited for weeks. Even his doughty defender, the *New York Herald*, had lost heart long before this.

When Commander Peary heard the news today he had but little comment to make. He said: "Three months ago from the Labrador coast I sounded an explicit and deliberately worded warning to the world based on complete and accurate information in regard to Dr. Cook's claim. In doing so I accepted the responsibility devolving upon me and fulfilled my duty to myself and to the public."

The public cannot claim to have fulfilled its duty towards him. The *Evening Post* in a strong leading article says: "Commander Peary has been defrauded of something which can never be restored to him... The joy of acclaim that should have greeted him at the triumphant close of his 35 years' quest can never be his."

Yet, as another journal remarks, events have demonstrated that Commander Peary not merely discovered the Pole, but that he is "a manly man — one that every American may proudly salute as a fellow-countryman and thus recover from the shame they feel that the other is also an American..."

paper at the Post Office.

EDUCATION 26

Primary schools tackle the language barrier

ARTS 27-29

Sylvie Guillem faces the music and dances on to TV

SPORT 31-36

Charlton calls time on his Irish adventure

TELEVISION AND RADIO
Pages 34,35

THE TIMES

BUSINESS EDITOR Lindsay Cook

FRIDAY DECEMBER 22 1995

MPs to quiz Barings chiefs over destruction of records

By Robert Miller

THREE former senior executives of Barings are to be quizzed by MPs on allegations that key documents were shredded and records of telephone conversations between London and Singapore were removed shortly after the bank crashed.

Sir Tom Arnold, chairman of the Commons Treasury Select Committee, yesterday confirmed that the committee will raise the matter when Peter Baring, former chairman of the 233-year-old merchant bank, Andrew Tuckey, his deputy, and Peter Norris, former chief executive officer,

appear before MPs early in the new year. Sir Tom said: "Any allegations of such a serious nature will be examined thoroughly."

The committee is also expected to talk to Hessel Lindenbergh, who heads ING Barings, ING, the Dutch banking and insurance group that bought Barings for a nominal £1 and agreed to foot the £800 million debt mountain caused by the trading activities of Nick Leeson.

It is understood that the documents in question were shredded and tapes removed shortly after the collapse, although the personnel responsible have not been formal-

ly identified. There is no suggestion that any of the three key executives knew about the incidents.

It was after a final board meeting on the evening of Sunday February 26 that Barings' directors were told there would be no Bank of England rescue package and that administrators had been appointed. It was at that point that all documents should have been secured within the bank's headquarters in the City of London.

The Commons committee, which is to hold its own inquiry into the £800 million Barings' collapse, hopes to launch its investigation in January by taking evidence

from officials from Simex, the Singapore International Monetary Exchange.

Sir Tom said: "We have written to ask Simex officials if they would be prepared to come over and help us."

Alistair Darling, Labour's City spokesman, said last night: "If there is even a hint that evidence relating to the collapse of Barings has been destroyed or tampered with, then the Treasury Select Committee must investigate the matter exhaustively."

The Securities and Futures Authority (SFA), which is investigating the role of 12 former Barings' executives in the crash, is understood to have examined the allega-

tions. Of the 12 people, only Mr Tuckey has been allowed to continue to work in the City, as an adviser to Barings, while the inquiry continues.

This is expected to be completed, possibly by the end of January.

An SFA spokesman said of the allegations: "This has been an extremely thorough investigation but I cannot confirm any details that might be relevant to any future disciplinary action."

If any of the 12 are found guilty of breaking City rules they could face unlimited fines or even expulsion from the securities industry.

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES

FT-SE 100	3632.3	(+19.6)
FT-SE All share	1776.91	(+7.71)
Nikkei	19663.25	(+204.66)
Dow Jones	5081.71	(+22.39)
S&P Composite	699.30	(+3.36)

US RATE

Federal Funds	5 1/4%	(5 1/4%)
Long Bond	110 1/4%	(110 1/4%)
Yield	6.13%	(6.13%)

LONDON MONEY

3-mth Interbank	6 1/2%	(6 1/2%)
Libor long gilt	110	(110 1/4)

STERLING

New York	1.5385*	(1.5418)
London	1.5385	(1.5369)
DM	2.2147	(2.2154)
FF	7.5930	(7.6178)
SF	1.7898	(1.7774)
Yen	156.55	(156.80)
S Index	82.8	(82.9)

DOLLAR

London	1.4383*	(1.4368)
DM	4.3377*	(4.3405)
SF	1.1707*	(1.1549)
Yen	101.78*	(101.73)
S Index	93.8	(94.1)
Tokyo close Yen	101.05	

NORTH SEA OIL

Brent 15-day (Mar)	\$17.50	(\$17.40)
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GOLD

London close	\$387.75	(\$387.90)
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* denotes midday trading price

Bruised BT braced for MMC inquiry

By Eric Reguly

BRITISH TELECOM faces a Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry after objecting yesterday to plans by Ofcom to increase its powers to investigate anti-competitive behaviour.

BT's continued opposition to the proposals by the industry regulator will further sour relations with Don Cruickshank, the Director-General of Telecommunications. The two sides have been at loggerheads all year over how much discretion the Director-General should have over the company's affairs.

A recent MMC referral, over phone number portability, went in the Director-General's favour earlier this week.

John Butler, BT's director of regulatory affairs, said: "We would not wish to enter lightly into an MMC reference, but this gives him the opportunity to interfere in BT's business to

an extent that has not been possible to date."

Mr Cruickshank's proposals are aimed at reducing his role as a day-to-day regulator so he can become more of a competition watchdog in what has become one of the world's most competitive telecoms markets.

To accomplish this, he wants to delete dozens of conditions on BT's licence, many of them relics of the early 1980s, giving the company greater freedom to set prices and introduce services. In exchange, he would keep a close eye on BT to ensure that it does not abuse the dominant position it retains in most categories of phone service.

For example, the Director-General would prevent BT from refusing to supply interconnection services to a competitor "on reasonable terms" or refusing to share network capacity "where there is no

genuine capacity restraint". Mr Cruickshank said the proposals are modelled closely on European competition law.

He disputed BT's claim that he was attempting to extend his powers over the company. The proposals, he said, operate within the framework of the Telecommunications Act, the Competition Act and the Fair Trading Act.

They give him the ability to force an operator to cease an anti-competitive practice but do not allow him to impose any fines. The offending company must comply with an enforcement order and has no right of appeal.

Mr Cruickshank said the proposed licence conditions on anti-competitive behaviour were less broad than BT has already accepted on Concert, its international telecoms joint venture with MCI of America.

BT, however, said the Director-General's powers would be enlarged because it would be up to him alone to decide what constitutes anti-competitive behavior.

Alan Rudge, BT's deputy managing director, said: "He would have almost absolute power, with no right of appeal to the courts or other disinterested body for impartial analysis if he gets the facts wrong or his decision is mistaken... Any extension of these powers should be a matter for Parliament."

BT said it was particularly concerned about the proposed condition that appears to require BT to warn its competitors about the introduction of new services "to enable them to respond with their own offerings in a timely manner".

BT said the condition is absurd because it would force the company to give away trade secrets.

The telecoms industry has until early next year to respond to the Ofcom proposals, which would come into effect in 1997.

Mr Cruickshank said there is some leeway in the discussions, but warned that the principle of moving Ofcom towards becoming a competition authority "is fixed".

Pennington, page 21



Consumers are saving less from their incomes than at any time since 1990

Fall in deficit bodes well for economy

By Janet Bush, Economics Correspondent

SOME shafts of light were thrown on prospects for the British economy with figures showing a much better than expected performance on the current account and a surprisingly sharp fall in the amount consumers are saving out of their income.

The Central Statistical Office reported a current account deficit of £1.34 billion in the third quarter, far below expectations. The deficit of £2.36 billion originally reported for the second quarter was cut by half to £1.18 billion. Most of this improvement came from a surge in invisible earnings.

In the National Accounts, the savings ratio, the percentage of money saved out of people's incomes, fell to 8.6 per cent from 9.3 per cent in the second quarter — the lowest level since the third quarter of 1990. Consumer spending rose 0.6 per cent in the third quarter even though real personal disposable income in-

creased only 0.2 per cent. The figures suggest consumers were financing spending out of savings, boding well for spending next year. However, some economists said there was a danger of reading too much into the figure which they said reflected the statistical treatment of bonuses paid when Lloyds Bank took over the Cheltenham & Gloucester.

The CSO yesterday confirmed growth in gross domestic product in the third quarter of 0.4 per cent. Growth in the second quarter was revised down slightly to 0.4 per cent from 0.5 per cent. Adam Cole of James Capel said yesterday that consumer spending should accelerate next year but still revised down his forecast for overall growth next year to 2.5 per cent from 3 per cent, citing a huge build-up of stocks by manufacturers.

Pennington, page 21
Comfort and joy, page 23

French water pair bid for Mid Kent

By Alasdair Murray

MID KENT HOLDINGS yesterday became the latest UK water industry bid target after two French companies, General Utilities and SAUR Water Services, made a 440p-a-share offer valuing it at £75 million.

In a terse response, Mid Kent said that the bid was unwelcome and advised shareholders to take no action. The company also said that the mandatory referral of the bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission would expose shareholders, customers and employees to a long period of uncertainty.

Mid Kent shares rose 77p to 430p, 10p below the bid.

General Utilities and SAUR already own 39 per cent of Mid Kent and say they aim to achieve better use of water resources by splitting Mid Kent into two divisions and merging these with their own neighbouring

water companies. The companies promised to talk with Mid Kent once the bid had MMC approval.

Mid Kent, supplying water to 525,000 people, last year made profits of £8.3 million on turnover of £38 million.

General Utilities and SAUR — in contrast to Lyonnaise des Eaux, the French water group that has acquired Northumbrian Water — have concentrated on building a network of small water companies in the UK.

General Utilities, part of the French water giant Compagnie Générale des Eaux, already holds 24.3 per cent of Mid Kent ordinary shares and owns the Folkestone and Dover water operations, adjoining Mid Kent's area.

SAUR, part of the French construction company, Bouygues, holds 14.5 per cent of Mid Kent and owns neighbouring South East Water.

Germans poised to buy Gartmore

By Patricia Tehan
Banking Correspondent

BANKGESELLSCHAFT Berlin, the state-owned German bank, is next month expected to announce plans to buy Gartmore, the fund manager, in a £560 million bid.

The Berlin-based bank had been considering a joint bid with NationsBank, the American bank that has an option on 25 per cent of Gartmore shares. But although NationsBank has not disappeared from the shortlist for Gartmore altogether, Bankgesellschaft Berlin has emerged as frontrunner.

The deal, close to Gartmore's £560 million market capitalisation, will end months of uncertainty over the ownership of the fund manager. Gartmore was

put up for sale by Banque Indosuez, which owns 75 per cent, after the French bank carried out a strategic review of its businesses. The bank, which bought Gartmore from British & Commonwealth for £140 million in 1990, had been hoping to finalise details of a sale before the end of the year. But negotiations over directors' contracts, how to tie in key directors such as Paul Myners, chief executive, and over the degree of independence they will be given under new ownership, have delayed an agreement.

NationsBank had been favourite to buy Gartmore. It has had a relationship with Gartmore since last year when it signed an agreement to sell international equity investment products to US retail clients.

NationsBank is keen to continue the

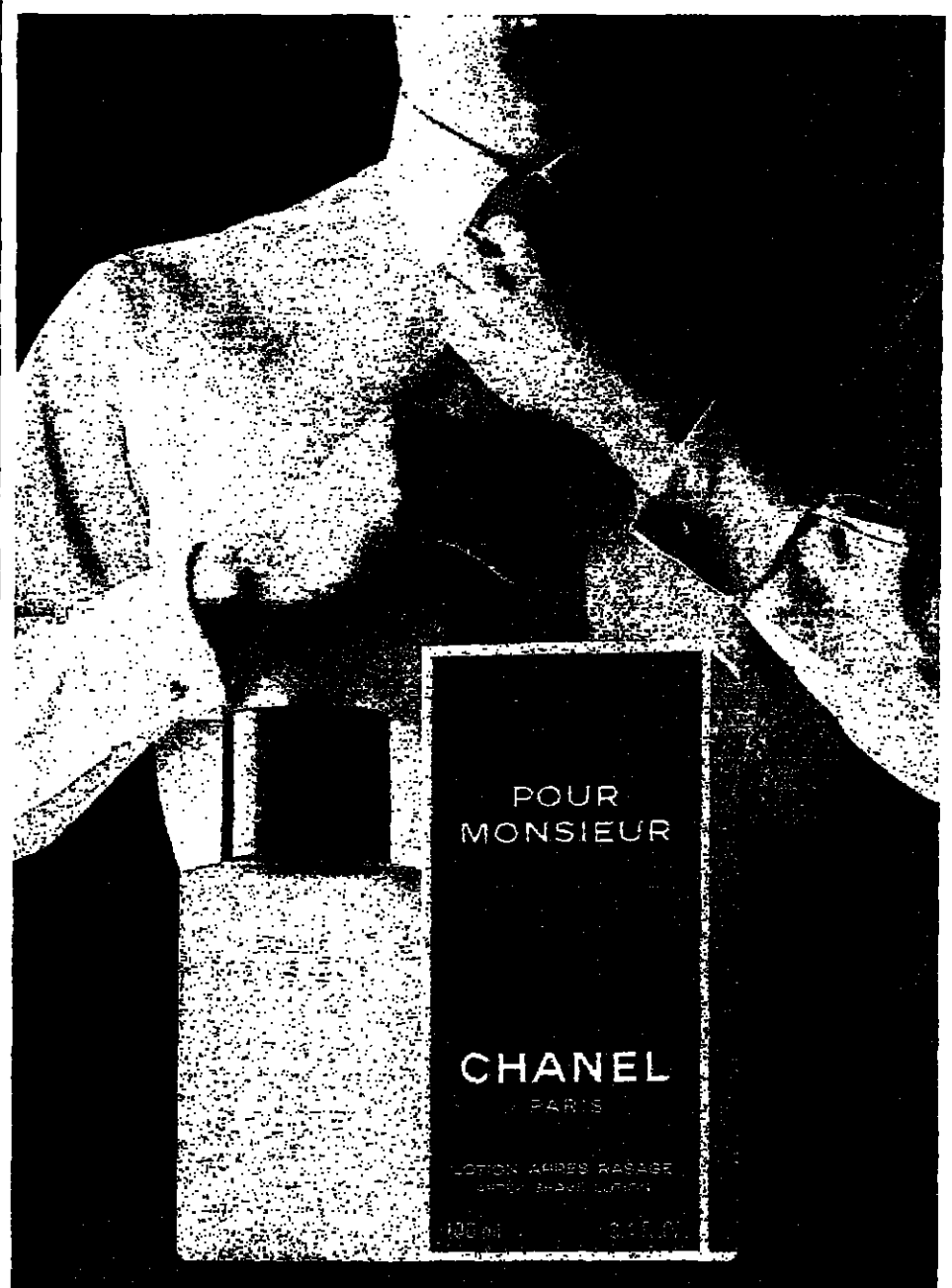
joint venture, but is discouraged from making a bid on its own by US accounting rules, which would mean that the goodwill in the purchase price would have to be written off, hitting profits over the next few years. Last month it started seeking a partner for a joint bid. Its search led it to Bankgesellschaft Berlin.

However, the Berlin bank is now at the top of the shortlist alone, although the deal is likely to retain an involvement with NationsBank.

Other firms interested in Gartmore have included the Prudential, Aegon, the Dutch insurer, and BAT. Although talks are now based on a deal with the German bank, the others could return to the negotiating table if the terms are not satisfactory to Indosuez and the Gartmore directors.



Myners: key director



POUR MONSIEUR
ELEGANCE IS TIMELESS

CHANEL

Hutchison £1.2bn loans will fund Orange expansion

By Eric Reguly

HUTCHISON TELECOM, the communications company heading for stock market flotation, has announced raising £1.2 billion in debt to finance expansion of its Orange mobile phone network and repay shareholder loans.

The non-recourse loans replace project financing supplied by Hutchison Telecom's two owners, Hutchison Whampoa, of Hong Kong, with 68.5 per cent, and British Aerospace (31.5 per cent). They were underwritten by Chase Investment Bank and JP Morgan Securities and syndicated to 49 other banks. The eight-year loan was set at the London Interbank Offered Rate (Libor) plus 150 basis points, falling to Libor plus 62.5 over the first three years.

Hutchison Telecom said that the loans would allow Orange to expand coverage to more than 95 per cent of the population, from the current 85 per cent. Orange now has 360,000 subscribers, putting it close in size to Mercury One-2-One.

Hans Snook, managing director, said the company will announce by February whether it will proceed with flotation. It is likely that any equity sale would occur by the end of March.



Hans Snook, left, yesterday, with Graham Howe, Hutchison Telecom finance director, will unveil a flotation decision next year

Over half job offers 'flexible'

By OUR INDUSTRIAL EDITOR

JOB vacancies offered in the Government Jobcentres are now largely for temporary or part-time work, new figures from the Employment Service show.

More than half the vacancies advertised in the high street Jobcentres are for work which is part-time or temporary. Of the almost 700,000 vacancies in the three months to October, 29 per cent were for part-time and 23 per cent for temporary work.

Whitehall officials estimate that the number of vacancies handled by Jobcentres is about a third of the total across the entire UK economy.

The data were supplied to the Labour Party and Michael Meacher, Shadow Employment Secretary, said yesterday: "These figures confirm our worst fears about job insecurity in the UK."

□ The TUC warns today that achieving the economic growth rate now forecast by Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, "will now require large and immediate reductions in short-term interest rates".

Engineers must reapply for £2.5bn GEC work

By ROSS TIEMAN, INDUSTRIAL CORRESPONDENT

ENGINEERING groups that enabled the General Electric Company to win a £2.5 billion submarine contract with their novel designs are being told they must bid afresh to participate in the construction.

Although the three nuclear-powered Trafalgar hunter-killer boats were to have been built on Tyneside, industry sources say that it is now "inconceivable" that they will not be assembled by VSEL, the Barrow-in-Furness shipyard

taken over by GEC this autumn. The decision to rebid for construction work will be a bitter blow to Amec, the offshore fabricator, which was to have assembled the vessels at its Wallsend yard.

Although it helped to develop innovative designs that will cut the construction cost, Amec will now be reduced to the role of a fabricator, at best. Amec will face aggressive tenders from VSEL, which has

a huge covered dock and a looming order shortage.

Discussions will begin next month about a contract to design and build the three Batch 2 Trafalgar boats, and provide support. The final contract, expected to take six months to negotiate, will include an option to build a further two boats.

GEC was manoeuvred into bidding for the work after the Ministry of Defence decided it was unwilling to pay whatever

VSEL, Britain's only submarine yard, cared to name.

Because of the scale of the contract, VSEL formed a consortium with the US electronics group Loral ASIC, Devonport Management Ltd and BAeSEA to make its bid.

Aided by MoD funding, GEC teamed up with Amec, the nuclear engineer Rolls-Royce and Associates and BMT Defence Services. Instead of building submarines in a specialist facility, they proposed assembling the boats on Tyneside and moving them by barge to a Royal Navy dockyard to install the nuclear propulsion system. This idea won outline approval from the MoD in October. The Government was forced to finalise its decision this month after GEC said it would not continue to fund two competing design teams beyond the year end.

A dispute has broken out between MPs in Newcastle and Barrow, anxious to maximise employment opportunities for their constituents. Industry sources say the dispute is misguided because final assembly accounts for a tiny fraction of the boats' costs.

Engineering pay awards hold steady despite Vauxhall

By PHILIP BASSETT, INDUSTRIAL EDITOR

PAY settlements in the engineering industry are holding steady, new figures suggest today, despite the three-year pay deal now likely to be accepted by Vauxhall Motors' manual workers.

The size of the Vauxhall package, including a cut in the working week, is the first three-year deal to be agreed by a leading motor manufacturer, and will put further pressure on pay negotiations at Ford, where unions are also pressing for a reduction in hours.

New figures published today by the EEF engineering employers' show that wage settlements in the three months to November averaged 3.4 per cent. Sixty per cent of pay settlements reported by members of the employers' federation were for rises above 3 per cent, with 45 per cent of the total running at 3 to 4 per cent. Just over four per cent were for pay freezes, while 14 per cent of the deals were for rises of 4 per cent or more.

The relative steadiness of the level of pay rises recorded by the EEF runs counter to the three-year pay deal reached by Vauxhall's 7,700 manual workers which trade union leaders welcomed yesterday. Vauxhall's package, which local union leaders at Luton and Ellesmere Port will be recommending for acceptance, was agreed after limited industrial action over pay and hours.

The package offers a rise of 4 per cent, or £12.5 a week, whichever is the higher, in the first year of the three-year agreement, followed by rises matching the level of inflation in the next two years. It also involves a cut in the official working week from 39 to 37 hours — a move also being sought by the motor trade unions in negotiations covering Ford's 22,000 manual workers.

Charles Golden, Vauxhall's chairman and managing director, said the "innovative" package, which improves the company's 3.5 per cent offer, fulfilled the goals of all involved: "It gives the company stability over an extended period, assists our long-term planning and maintains our capacity to produce vehicles."

Leaders of the Transport and General Workers' Union, and the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union are likely to ballot their Vauxhall members on the package in the new year, but union officials are confident it will be accepted and the overtime ban and other industrial action then lifted.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

Homeowners feel decline stemmed

HOMEOWNERS are less pessimistic about the prospects for house prices over the next 12 months, according to a new survey, boosting hopes that the steady decline in property values has been halted. Only 15 per cent believe the value of their homes will decrease in 1996, while 80 per cent of those polled by NOP for Barclays think the price will either remain the same or increase. Homeowners in the South are the most optimistic, with only 13 per cent who think prices will go down. Those in the South West are the most pessimistic with 20 per cent predicting a fall in residential property values. Barclays said that 1995 mortgage levels in this region had been the lowest of any in the country compared to last year. Jim Chadwick, a director of Barclays Mortgages, said: "Recent reports suggest house prices are starting to pick up again. Now, our study also shows that far fewer people are pessimistic about the future for house prices next year. Taken as a whole, these indicators seem to point to a better year for the housing market in 1996." Last month the Barclays Mortgage Index showed that monthly lending increased by 5 per cent compared with October, although year-on-year lending was still down 1 per cent. Pennington, page 21

Medeva settles action

MEDEVA, the drugs company, will take a one-off charge of £1.5 million this year as a result of a US court action that has now been settled in full. The settlement involves the creation of a \$6.75 million fund for buyers of its ADRs in America between November 1992 and July 1993. Of this \$3.9 million and more than half its defence costs are covered by insurance. Bill Bogie, chief executive, said Medeva denied any wrongdoing and had valid defences to all the allegations in the lawsuit. But the deal avoided more costs and use of executive time.

Littlechild advisers

PROFESSOR Stephen Littlechild, the electricity regulator, stepped up his review of the transmission price control applied to the National Grid yesterday with the appointment of three advisers. Consultation on controls on transmission, which accounts for about 5 per cent of the final price of electricity to customers, finishes at the end of next month. The three unpaid advisers are Sir William Barlow, president of the Royal Academy of Engineering, Sir Peter Walters, chairman of Blue Circle Industries, and John Sadler, Pearl Group chairman.

ICI in China venture

ICI is forming a joint venture with the Yu Gang Company of China to produce titanium dioxide. The joint venture will operate and expand a plant built during the past two years in Chongqing, Sichuan. Production levels are expected to run at up to 25,000 tonnes a year in the first two years, with a second line of operation planned to double capacity by the end of the century. Alan Pedder, chief executive of ICI's TiO₂ subsidiary, said China is a large market for titanium dioxide consumption with enormous potential for growth.

BP to sign Algeria deal

BRITISH PETROLEUM is expected to sign a \$3 billion gas deal with Sonatrach, the Algerian state-owned gas and oil company, tomorrow in the town of Hassi Messaoud, where Algeria's main oilfield is located. The new upstream licence covers 25,000 square kilometres of desert in the In Salah region, 1,200 kilometres south of Algiers. Production is expected to be ten billion cubic metres a year. BP will provide 65 per cent of the financing and expects to take about a third of net profits in the 20 to 30-year life of the project.

Meggitt sells six firms

MEGGITT, the manufacturer of aviation instruments, has sold six non-core firms operating in analytical instrumentation and fluid processing to TGE Group for a total of £22.8 million, comprising £14.9 million in cash, £3 million in TGE Group loan notes, and the assumption by TGE Group of net debt of about £1.5 million. Meggitt will also take a 15 per cent stake in TGE. The sales were in line with its divestment programme, the group said, and proceeds would significantly cut gearing.

SmithKline expands

SMITHKLINE Beecham, the British pharmaceuticals group, has become Germany's biggest consumer healthcare company with the £92 million purchase of Abtei Pharma-Vertriebs GmbH, which had sales of DM110 million in 1994. Abtei develops and markets a range of vitamins, minerals and natural medicines. Peter Jensen, chairman of SmithKline Beecham Consumer Healthcare Europe, said that natural medicines and health supplements have "tremendous potential for expansion".

Nutricia prices curb

JOHN TAYLOR, the Competition and Consumer Affairs Minister, has imposed price constraints on Nutricia Holdings, the Dutch baby foods producer, after its merger this year with Scientific Hospital Supplies Holdings, which gives it an 88 per cent share of the gluten-free and low-protein product market. Nutricia will be allowed to lift prices of bread, rolls and flour mixes by a maximum of 2 per cent below the inflation rate for a four-year period. The company has until March 21 to accept these conditions.

Confidence in decline

FINANCE directors and controllers are less confident about the UK economy. A Chartered Institute of Management Accountants survey found 65 per cent of finance directors "fairly optimistic" about their own businesses, but only 30 per cent are optimistic about the national economy in 1996 (57 per cent a year ago). The survey forecasts higher industrial unrest, particularly in the public sector, while 59 per cent of respondents believe that Britain will be more competitive within the European Union over the next five years.

Redland moves on Ennemix

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

REDLAND, the building materials company, is expected to launch a takeover offer for Ennemix, the aggregates business, after acquiring a 30 per cent stake at 32p a share yesterday.

Ennemix responded by issuing a statement advising shareholders to take no immediate action. The shares closed up 12p at 32p, valuing the company at £5.8 million. Redland shares climbed 3p to 385p.

Redland also bought all of Ennemix's preference shares for £250,000, which the company said will grant it another 3 per cent of voting rights when they are converted. Redland said it was looking to start talks with Ennemix but would make no immediate decision on whether it would launch a full takeover.

Ennemix was floated in 1994 at 63p a share but has struggled to meet earnings forecasts and its share price has slipped back. The company made a £233,000 loss at the half-year stage and was forced to make a series of cost savings.

Tempus, page 22

Goldman Sachs partners look again at flotation

FROM RICHARD THOMSON IN NEW YORK

GOLDMAN SACHS, the last major investment banking partnership left on Wall Street, may put itself up for sale next year if partners vote in favour of a flotation.

Jon Corzine, the chairman and senior partner, admitted that a debate over going public is raging within the bank and that the senior management were trying to achieve a consensus among the partners. A decision could therefore be several months away. He said that the present structure of the firm was not a constraint and that Goldmans

had never been short of capital, the usual reason for partnerships floating.

The partners last considered the issue nine years ago but voted it down. One of the most profitable investment banks in the world, Goldmans has always found ways of raising new capital through links with insurance companies and other banks such as Sumitomo.

Mr Corzine said that every time the bank had decided to remain as a partnership it had gone on to make better profits thereafter. The bank's profits

for the year to November 30 are understood to have been \$1.37 billion, a substantial improvement from last year when they were only \$508 million.

However, it still does not come close to matching the record \$2.7 billion in earnings in 1993. Mr Corzine took over as chairman after the sudden fall in profits in 1994.

Insiders said that a flotation was not a foregone conclusion. Analysts said Goldmans would probably look for a price of about twice its book value of \$5 billion.

TOURIST RATES

Bank	Buy	Sell
Australia \$	2.17	2.21
Canada \$	16.82	16.12
Denmark Kr	46.58	44.25
France F	2,210	2,050
Germany DM	0.745	0.850
Italy Lira	8.21	8.41
Japan Yen	171.20	165.20
Norway Kr	5.2400	4.9800
Portugal Esc	206.00	240.00
Spain Ptas	166.00	162.00
Sweden Kr	10.87	10.07
Switzerland Fr	1.32	1.24
Turkey Lira	1,600	1,400
USA \$	1.87	1.92

Rates for small denomination notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank PLC. Different rates apply to travellers' cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

LEGAL & PUBLIC NOTICES

0171-782 7344

PUBLIC NOTICES

ELIZABETH OF BRIDGES
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the above named person has been appointed as the sole and exclusive agent for the sale of the property known as 10, 11 and 12, The Priory, London NW1 6JF, and that the sale of the property will be held on the 22nd day of February 1996 at 11.00 am.

LEGAL NOTICES

ROBERT WISEMAN DAINES PLC
A PETITION having been presented to the Court of Session on 14th December 1995 by Robert Wiseman Daines PLC, a company incorporated under the Companies Act 1985, for the winding up of the company, the Court has appointed Mr. Robert Wiseman Daines as Liquidator of the company.

LEGAL NOTICES

THE INSOLVENCY ACT 1986
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the above named person has been appointed as the sole and exclusive agent for the sale of the property known as 10, 11 and 12, The Priory, London NW1 6JF, and that the sale of the property will be held on the 22nd day of February 1996 at 11.00 am.

PURSUANT TO THE TRUSTEE ACT 1925
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LEGAL NOTICES

WINDSOR LIMITED
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CHANCERY DIVISION
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CONTRACTS & TENDERS

CITY OF ABERDEEN DISTRICT COUNCIL GAS SERVICING CONTRACTS (HOUSING)
Applications are invited from suitably experienced Contractors wishing to be selected for the above works.

STOCK GROUP
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the above named person has been appointed as the sole and exclusive agent for the sale of the property known as 10, 11 and 12, The Priory, London NW1 6JF, and that the sale of the property will be held on the 22nd day of February 1996 at 11.00 am.

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□ Ofel seeks a watchdog role □ A better way of ordering warships □ C&G distorts the economic picture

Cruickshank lays down the law

□ "I AM the Law in MegaCity One," was the call sign of Judge Dredd, the cartoon hero recently immortalised on film. Don Cruickshank wants to be the law in MegaCity Telecom, and stripped of all the extraneous noise on the line, his changes to BT's licence amount to the assumption of the role of judge, jury and executioner.

This has long been the game plan for Mr Cruickshank, who has fired the petty business of combing daily through the tangle of regulations governing BT and years for a broader role. So it should be no surprise to see him announce plans to strap on his pistol yesterday and head for the mean streets. Equally unsurprising was BT's fierce opposition to the idea.

A year ago Mr Cruickshank made it clear that he wanted to move away from basic regulation and become more of a watchdog over anti-competitive practices. This is the heart of a long-running debate over regulation — should one intervene in every aspect of the affairs of one's charges, or merely ensure that the environment in which they operate is as free as possible and let market forces do the rest?

When BT was the British telecoms industry, the first approach was the only feasible one. With perhaps 15 per cent of that industry now in the hands of

others, the second becomes possible. But Mr Cruickshank's method is to restrict his policing to the dominant party, still BT, to ensure its operations do not hamper competition, and allow the smaller operators to seize from it what positions in the market they can.

The bonfire of the regulations he proposed yesterday is part of this process, and Mr Cruickshank insists it is all well within his powers. But for BT, rather than throwing off the regulatory shackles, it raises the fear that one man will in future be able to rule, without much consultation and with little prospect of appeal, on any aspect of the company's business.

Meanwhile, its competitors can do what they want. BT wants this extension of the regulatory role thrown back to the body it feels should rule on such policy matters, Parliament.

BT has a point. It is worth examining in detail just one of Mr Cruickshank's proposals. He says the dominant network — BT for as far forward as anyone can contemplate — "could abuse its dominance by failing to give

interconnecting networks information sufficiently far in advance to enable them to respond with their offerings in a timely manner."

In other words, if BT plans a new initiative, it must throw those plans open to the scrutiny of any competitor well in time for them to counter it.

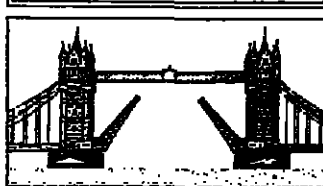
This must be unacceptable to any commercial business, which is why the whole matter is going to have to be considered by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, the only available court of appeal, before Mr Cruickshank is allowed to carry out his first judicial execution.

The Ministry's tender trap

□ MONOPOLY suppliers deliver bad and expensive products late. No one knows this better than the public sector, exploited by incompetent suppliers for as long as anyone can remember.

But change is at hand. London Underground broke from the clutches of its monopoly supplier of escalators by buying overseas.

PENNINGTON



Railway operators now buy their trains from America and Europe as well as Britain, and trains and coaches made here have improved, partly as a result.

Now it is the turn of the Ministry of Defence to wake up to the benefits of appropriate competition. Although Sir Peter Levene unleashed the blunt blade of competition on the defence industry during the 1980s, it has taken the MoD a long time to hone an edge that can achieve the surgery required.

Crude competition between suppliers simply put the least competent manufacturers out of business. But much of the fault lay within the MoD, which continued to design ships and other weapons of indifferent

merit, at high cost.

More recent competitions have put the design work itself out to tender, with encouraging results. In spite of the misfortune of being holed on the slipway, the Navy's new helicopter carrier, HMS Ocean, is being built in one yard and finished in a second. Huge cost savings will result.

The Navy's next survey ship is to be built by BAe/SEMA, an electronics company that does not even own a shipyard.

Now, by encouraging GEC to bid against VSEL to build and maintain its next nuclear submarines, the MoD appears poised to trigger a remarkable advance in manufacturing techniques, alongside cost savings for the taxpayer.

Cost savings in Britain's enormous weapons procurement budget are achievable at several stages, support, manufacture, and design, and of these the last is best suited to competitive tendering. Spending even tens of millions to achieve the best possible design from competing rival teams is established practice in the American aerospace industry. It can save hundreds of

millions at the manufacturing and support stages. What a pity the MoD failed to learn such an obvious lesson sooner.

No savings grace

□ THE dramatic fall in the savings ratio in the third quarter looks, at first sight, alarmingly like a vindication of the Chancellor's optimism about consumer spending powering the economy to 3 per cent growth next year.

For those — including the Chancellor's six independent forecasters — who have loudly pooh-poohed his forecast, there is a perfectly sane statistical quirk to explain the number. It can be summed up in two words and an ampersand: Cheltenham & Gloucester.

Bonuses paid out by Lloyds after its takeover amounted to £1.8 billion. If all that has been spent, then personal income in the third quarter would have risen by more than 1 per cent instead of being virtually flat. Given that the savings ratio is

simply the difference between income and consumer spending, stripping out the Cheltenham & Gloucester effect would probably have meant that the savings ratio would have risen slightly instead of falling sharply.

The bonuses to C&G customers are treated statistically as a financial transaction, not as income, so they are not factored into the National Accounts as extra cash, even though this is palpably what they are.

Clearly, merger bonuses — not to mention the rebate from the sale of the National Grid — will play a part in boosting consumer spending. But not too much should be read into that fall in the savings ratio. Fear of unemployment — worse now than a year ago, as *The Times* reported yesterday — cannot be erased by statisticians.

No home comforts

□ HOMEOWNERS should not read too much into signs of a pick-up in the housing market either. A couple of good monthly figures for mortgage lending do not a recovery make, and not the sort of single-digit price rises forecast by the pundits for 1996. Barclays says that most owners expect the value of their homes to rise next year. But past experience suggests that this is not a self-fulfilling prophecy.

British Steel to challenge state aid for Irish

BY CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

BRITISH STEEL has set itself on a collision course with the Government by preparing a legal challenge to the deal struck on subsidies for Irish Steel.

The UK had opposed Irish government subsidies for its only steel plant, but agreed to abandon its objection at an EU Industry Council meeting after a compromise on production and export markets. London, which could have halted the aid package as such subsidies require the unanimous approval of EU members, had caused increasing political tension with its stance. It had said the aid package — worth up to £1.38 billion including debt relief —

would endanger jobs in British Steel.

The company, which says the future of its plant at Shelton, Staffordshire, will be jeopardised by greater production from Irish Steel, yesterday declared the compromise insufficient. A spokesman said: "We don't think the agreement changes very much at all. We are very disappointed. We had said that we were concerned about job losses and that remains the case."

The company is to challenge the EU's sanction in the European Court of Justice. It says that individual subsidies are illegal under the 1991 European Coal and Steel Treaty. It took similar action after a 1993 meeting of Europe's Industry Council ratified aid by several countries to their steel producers. That action is still waiting for a hearing.

British Steel management will say in the new year what action will be taken at Shelton after reviewing the full implications of the deal. The spokesman said: "It is too early to assess the exact impact. The management is currently sifting through the deal." Shelton employs 400 and supports a further 100 contract jobs.

The British Iron and Steel Producers' Association backed the move by British Steel. Ian Rodgers, director of international affairs, said: "The deal is a very poor one for the UK." "The Department of Trade and Industry, which has led the negotiations on the restrictions to be applied to Irish Steel, said: "This is entirely between the European Commission and British Steel."

Irish Steel will now go to new owners, ISPAT International, the Indian corporation, is buying the company for a nominal £1 after the aid package was arranged to salvage the company which has turned in profits only three times in the past 20 years. Lakshmi Mittal, ISPAT chairman, said: "This agreement is not the one we desired, but we are pleased that it has been possible to reach a workable resolution."

Courtaulds disposes of Amtico

BY SARAH BAGNALL

COURTAULDS, the paints to polymers group, has sold Amtico, its luxury vinyl flooring business, to management for an initial £49 million, as part of its strategy of focusing on core businesses. Courtaulds is concentrating on industrial products in which it has a significant international market share.

Under the terms of the deal, Courtaulds could receive a further payment of up to £3.8 million depending on the profit and cashflow performance of Amtico. Courtaulds is retaining a 10 per cent stake.

Amtico, which designs, manufactures and markets a wide range of luxury vinyl floor tiles, made an operating profit of £3.3 million on sales of £35.2 million in the year to March 31. Net assets at March 31 stood at £25.4 million. It employs 420 people and sells in 26 countries, but mainly the UK and Germany.



Michael Bright, foreground, and executive director Alan Clarke

Insurer buys in France

INDEPENDENT Insurance, where Michael Bright is chief executive, is expanding in France with the acquisition of La Palatine Assurances SA, underwriter of motor, property and personal accident insurance products which has been operating at a loss.

Independent Insurance has secured warranties and indemnities, including guarantees as to the adequacy of the claims reserve. The British

company will also receive a £140 million payment from Groupement Français d'Assurances, the vendor, to cover restructuring costs.

Garth Ramsay, chairman of Independent, said: "We have been reviewing expansion of our involvement in the French market for a number of years and feel it is now at a stage where our approach to underwriting and distribution will prove particularly successful."

Ultimatum issued to agents at Lloyd's

BY SARAH BAGNALL

LOYD'S of London is holding a gun to the heads of the market's managing agents by demanding they sign highly controversial contracts by today or be thrown out of the market.

The contracts require Lloyd's agents to agree to pay a bill next year — without knowing the size of the payment. The bill is the sum of money a syndicate will be charged for handling over all its old-year liabilities to Equitas, the reinsurance company. In turn, the syndicates will demand money from names to meet the bill.

The terms of the contract have been amended four times in a bid to appease disgruntled agents and names. However, several agents remain concerned. One said: "Agents are being asked to sign over their rights blindfolded."

"If they do, they will have to pay whatever Equitas premium they are landed with. It could be anything and they would have no rights."

Christopher Stockwell, chairman of Lloyd's Names Associations' Working Party, said: "It is disgraceful that Lloyd's are ordering agents to sign documents they do not agree with and ignoring names' instructions to their agents not to sign."

In a letter to agents, Ron Sandler, Lloyd's chief executive, said he was aware that some names have raised concerns but these "seem to stem from a misunderstanding of its provisions".

The new contracts take on extra significance when seen in conjunction with another development at Lloyd's. About two months ago, Lloyd's required agents to agree to hand over to its administrative centre the funds names have deposited with the market.

The implication of this is that, if a name gets an Equitas bill that he refuses to pay, then Lloyd's will have the right to draw down on his deposit.

Currently, members' agents act as trustees for names and an agent's consent is needed to draw down a name's funds.

The changes come as Lloyd's tries to undergo a radical restructuring, involving the establishment of Equitas and a £2.5 billion settlement offer to names. The need for agents to sign the contracts by today is because Equitas has to be registered by January 1.

Collapse in money-trading volumes fuels Trio's losses

BY MARTIN BARROW

TRIO HOLDINGS, the international money-broking group, suffered an £11.8 million pre-tax loss in the year to September 30, it was revealed yesterday.

The company, which earned profits of £2.4 million in the previous 12 months, blamed a collapse in trading volumes on money markets. This was caused by reduced exchange rate volatility and a decline in currency trading, "in a climate of orchestrated stability of interest rates", it said.

Traditional money brokers have lost material market share to the automated electronic dealing systems introduced by Reuters and EBS, an

operator owned by a consortium of banks.

David Hagan, chief executive of Trio, said: "The high-profile events at Barings in Singapore and Daiwa in New York have undoubtedly contributed to a further restraint of proprietary trading by our customer base."

Trio's pre-tax losses included restructuring charges of £4.6 million, comprising the cost of closing a subsidiary in Singapore and redundancy costs. The company has closed its spot \$/DM broking desks in London, Hong Kong and Tokyo, as well as derivatives desk in London, the off-balance sheet desk in Tokyo, and

the energy and Canadian dollar desks in New York. Operations in Singapore were closed on September 18.

The company said further restructuring was on the cards to ensure that it could continue as a going concern.

German subsidiaries have been sold since the year-end. At the end of September the company had adjusted net assets of £17.9 million, including cash of £10.9 million.

Losses per share of 14.82p compared with earnings per share previously of 0.71p. Shareholders, who received 0.1p per share last time, will receive nothing for the latest financial year.

NOTICE TO ALL BORROWERS

The Society's standard variable base rate for existing borrowers will be reduced to 7.49% from 1st February 1996 or at such other time in accordance with the terms of the mortgage deed.

NOTICE TO INVESTORS

REVISED INTEREST RATES EFFECTIVE AT 22nd DECEMBER 1995

AMOUNT INVESTED	GROSS%	Net%	GROSS% (MONTHLY)	Net% (MONTHLY)
NEW ISSUE				
DIRECT 50				
(ONLY AVAILABLE THROUGH NEWCASTLE DIRECT)				
£100,000 - £300,000	6.90	5.52	6.65	4.99
CURRENT ISSUES				
NOVA PLUS SPECIAL ACCOUNT				
£200,000 - £300,000	3.80	3.04	-	-
NOVA PLUS ACCOUNT				
(INCLUDING CLOSED ISSUES TRANSFERRED ON MATURITY)				
NOVA GROSS ACCOUNT				
(Net Rates do not Apply for New Issues)				
£50,000 - £200,000	3.55	2.84	3.55	2.86
£10,000 - £49,999	3.00	2.40	3.00	2.25
£5,000 - £9,999	2.30	1.84	2.30	1.73
£500 - £4,999	2.00	1.60	-	-
£1 - £499	0.50	0.40	-	-
NOVA STAR (ISSUE EIGHT)				
£1,000 - £300,000	6.00	4.90	5.75	4.31
CLOSED ISSUES				
(ACCOUNTS NO LONGER AVAILABLE)				
SUPER 90 ACCOUNT				
£500 - £300,000	5.05	4.04	4.73	3.55
HIGH/EXTRA INTEREST ACCOUNTS				
£250 - £300,000	3.40	2.55	3.40	2.65
PREFERENCE SHARES				
£10,001 - £300,000	1.34	0.82	-	-
£1 - £10,000	0.50	0.40	-	-
NOVA STAR (SIXTH/SEVENTH ISSUES)				
£1,000 - £300,000	6.00	4.90	6.00	4.50
NOVA SELECT				
£5,000 - £300,000	6.00	4.80	6.00	4.50
NOVA SUPER FEEDER (SAFE FEEDER ACCOUNT)				
£5,000 - £300,000	6.00	4.80	-	-
NOVA FEEDER (SAFE ACCOUNT)				
£1,200	5.00	4.00	-	-

The following account will also be reduced by 0.50% (gross) Regular monthly, High level, Investing, Accumulation, Monthly Income, Deposit, Subscription and Premium Bonds.

Interest is payable net of the prevailing rate of tax (which may be increased by non-residents) on interest in the required verification year. The net rates quoted are illustrative only and assume a rate of interest of 25% for all issues on which interest is payable before 24/05/96 (including all monthly payment instalments). Those issues on which the next payment of interest is due after 24/05/96 assume a rate of 25% for all issues on which interest is payable before 24/05/96. All interest rates are subject to change without notice. Further details available on request.



Principal Office: Portland House, New Bridge St, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 6AL.

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De Beers seeks deal on Russian gem sales

BY SARAH CUNNINGHAM



Nicky Oppenheimer, team leader

DE BEERS will today hold last-ditch talks in Moscow with Russian ministers in the hope of securing a new diamond sales contract before the existing agreement expires on December 31.

The current five-year contract between De Beers' Central Selling Organisation (CSO), which markets 80 per cent of the world's diamonds, and Russia allows the CSO to market 95 per cent of Russia's uncut gems.

Analysts believe that the CSO will be forced to agree a temporary roll over of the existing contract into the new year. De Beers had hoped to avoid this, but its desire to defend the effectiveness of the cartel by keeping Russia inside is expected to prevail.

A team from the London-based CSO, headed by its chairman, Nicky Oppen-

heimer, who is deputy chairman of De Beers, went to Moscow on Wednesday. De Beers said that it had no idea if a new contract would be signed. "Of course we were hopeful, for the good of the diamond market as a whole, but we don't know anything yet and Christmas is looming," a spokesman said.

James Fenton, diamond analyst with South African stockbroker Anderson Wilson, said: "A whole new agreement is most unlikely because they have too little time. They are far more likely to roll the current contract over, agree to hold talks in the new year, and arrange a new contract in several months' time."

Russia and the CSO have been talking about a new contract for 18 months. The possibility of the Russians withdrawing from the CSO cartel has

been unsettling the diamond market, which has had to contend with constant contract-breaking "leakages" of Russian diamonds.

Last week, the negotiations were thrown into confusion when the upper house of Russia's parliament rejected a law that would have allowed the Siberian mining company Almaz Rossii-Sakha (AMS) to deal directly with De Beers. Instead, the state committee for gemstones and precious metals, which holds Russia's diamond stockpile, will continue to control sales. The stockpile has been the source of the leakages.

The Russians want the new contract to allow them to make more sales outside the CSO and analysts think that they will get their way. "It is inevitable," Mr Fenton said.

London calm in face of market upheavals in US

THE London market turned in a resilient performance, with shares ending near their highs as UK investors held their nerve in spite of the recent roller-coaster performance across the Atlantic.

A positive start on Wall Street, with the Dow Jones rebounding from Wednesday's late 50-point drop, helped to bolster sentiment in London. Year-end portfolio switching by fund managers helped the FT-SE 100 to close up 19.6 at 3,633.3.

In spite of end-of-year book-keeping, volume only reached 692 million shares as dealers left early ahead of today's half-day session.

British Gas continued its run, adding 7½p to 257½p, on volume of 16.6 million shares, for a three-day gain of 28½p. The advance has been fuelled by the cold spell and a high gas price in America, combined with renewed speculation about a possible bid from Shell, up 7p at 82½p, or BP, 4p stronger at 53½p.

BT added 5p to 351½p, on volume of 12.5 million shares, in spite of a further deterioration in relations with Ofcom, the industry regulator.

With the year-end approaching fast, new broker tips helped lift a number of stocks including Asda, up 1½p to 110½p, Dixons, 1p firmer at 42½p, GKN, 7p stronger at 76½p, and Glaxo Wellcome, 2p firmer at 88½p.

The engineering sector was one of the best performing among leading shares, with investor support after recent orders, broker recommendations and recovery prospects fuelling the advance. GEC advanced 10p to 338½p on hopes that the defence giant will soon be awarded a £2.5 billion Royal Navy nuclear submarine contract for the next generation of Hunter-Killer submarines. Rolls-Royce, boosted by a recent aero engines order and news that John Rose, who currently heads R-R's aerospace division, will be the group's new chief executive, added 8½p to 185p, on volume of 3.8 million shares.

Elsewhere in a buoyant sector, TI Group added 1½p to 447½p, Siebe 15p to 78½p and British Aerospace, boosted by a combination of broker recommendations, speculation of a possible bid from GEC and prospects ahead of the flotation of its 32 per cent-owned Orange mobile phone subsid-



Riding high: GEC boosted by hopes of submarine contract

ary, gained 2½p to 779p. Panmure Gordon recommends buying Cobham, up 1p to 461p, but rates GKN a sell. However, there was more gloom for shareholders in McDonnell Information Systems Group (MDIS). Shares in the beleaguered computer services group more than halved to 29p, before part-recovering to 36½p, down

even after losses in the US. Staying with warnings, shares in T Clarke tumbled to 34p before ending at 42p, down 7p, after the electrical contractor warned of a £1 million pre-tax loss for 1995 following a further deterioration in trading conditions.

Mid Kent Holdings surged 7½p to 430p on news that two French utilities, General Utili-

ties and Saur, plan to launch a £75 million bid for the South East water group. The two French companies have indicated a 440p-a-share bid price, but have not yet launched a firm offer ahead of a mandatory MMC probe. Mid Kent urged shareholders to take no action on the "unsolicited and unwelcome" offer.

Enamix jumped 12p to 32p as the market pondered a full

bid from Redland after the building materials giant acquired a 29.99 per cent stake in the Nottingham-based quarrying and ready-mixed concrete company, Redland, up 3p to 38½p, has acquired 3,481,840 ordinary shares and 844,857 convertible preference shares in Enamix, at 32p a share. Redland said it may or may not make an offer for Enamix, which advised shareholders to take no immediate action.

Independent Insurance jumped 7½p to 361p after the UK composite insurer took control of La Palatine Assurance, a loss-making French financial services firm, in a deal that involves independent receiving £18.4 million.

Vaux Group stood out in a largely dull brewing sector, with bid speculation helping shares in the Sunderland brewing to Swallow Hotels and nursing homes group advance 18p to 275p. Market favourites to launch a takeover offer for Vaux include Bass, down 15p at 68½p, and Wolverhampton & Dudley, unchanged at 58½p.

Elsewhere in the sector, Allied Domeq fell 9p to 51½p, Scottish & Newcastle 3p to 600p, and Whitbread 5p to 660p. Highland Distillers retreated 4p to 319p, with the shares depressed by a "bed-and-breakfast" deal below the market price.

On the new issues front, strong institutional support helped Vectra, the specialty chemical business, make a strong market debut, with the shares ending at 240p, giving a 70p premium on the 170p flotation price. Unicorn International ended its first day at 134p, giving a more modest premium of 10p over its 130p a share float price.

GILT-EDGED: Gilts opened lower on the back of weaker US bonds overnight, with stocks drifting sideways for most of the day in very quiet trade. The March series of the long gilt future lost 11 ticks to 109½/16, on volume of 21,000 contracts traded. Among conventional stocks, shorts suffered falls of up to 1½p, while longer-dated stocks saw losses extend to 1½p and index-linked fell by up to 1½p.

NEW YORK: A rally in high tech and cautious optimism about a budget deal in Washington kept Wall Street stocks trading higher. At midday, the Dow Jones Industrial average was up 22.39 points at 5,781.71.

London: FT 30 3633.3 (+19.6) FT 100 3633.3 (+19.6) FT-SE Mid 250 3707.3 (+7.2) FT-SE A 350 1803.5 (+8.3) FT-SE Eurotrack 100 1465.57 (+1.68) FT A All-Share 1776.91 (+7.71) FT Net Financials 1677.73 (+10.18) FT Fixed Income 114.34 (+0.02) FT Govt Secs 95.38 (+0.27) Barclays 240.00 SSE Volume 602.2M US\$ (Datastream) 198.8M (+0.23) US\$ 1.391 (+0.001) German Mark 2.216 (+0.0028) Deutsche Mark 62.8 (+0.1) Bank of England official close (April) ECU 1.66 n/a ECU 1.66 n/a 199.8 Nov 1994 Jan 1995 100 RFR 149.8 Nov 1994 Jan 1995 100

Brussels: General 8296.63 (+25.09) Paris: CAC 40 1834.38 (+3.18) Zurich: SIK Gen 702.60 (same)

London: Cash Converters Intl 24 ... Century Inns 117 - 2 ... Com de Part Fin 510 ... Cortworth (150) 151 ... Cox Insurance 110 ... Crown Products 53 - 4 ... Dmatak 81 ... East Surrey NV 448 ... Finsh Tech Tr (100) 102 ... Gardner (I) 133 - 1 ... Gearhouse Gp (202) 202 ... Jasmim 24 - 1 ... Manx & Oseas 24 - 1 ... National Grid (204) 199 - 1 ... Pet City 380 ... Polymasc Pharms 127 ... Revelation Pict 100 ... Rushmore Wynne 34 - 1 ... Trocadero 47 ... Unicorn Intl (133) 134 ... Vectra 240 ... Viewinn 130 ... Wilmington 66 ...

RIGHTS ISSUES: Dnase Hse n/p (10p) 14 ... Melrose n/p (34) 6 ... Roxbury n/p (3) 4 ... TBI n/p (50) 3 ...

MAJOR CHANGES: RISES: Vaux Group 275p (+18p) Incheong 240p (+10p) Fibron Com 448p (+15p) Stagecoach 325p (+10p) British Aerospace 779p (+21p) Argyle 327p (+10p) GEC 338p (+10p) FALLS: MDIS 361p (-24p) LBMS 298p (-11p) I. Joseph 448p (-10p) Bass 685p (-15p) Farnell Elect 702p (-9p) Closing Prices Page 25

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MAJOR INDICES

New York (midday): Dow Jones 5081.71 (+22.39) S&P Composite 609.30 (+3.36)

Tokyo: Nikkei Average 19653.25 (+204.64) Hang Seng 9107.61 (+21.75)

Amsterdam: EOE Index 480.36 (+0.25) Sydney: AO 2203.80 (+4.30)

Frankfurt: DAX 2265.07 (+3.00) Singapore: Straits 2255.75 (+28.58)

Brussels: General 8296.63 (+25.09) Paris: CAC 40 1834.38 (+3.18)

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TEMPUS

Bubbling up in the cold

OIL prices have been on the rise since the end of September, fuelling a strong rally in the oil sector. Brent blend has risen \$1 over the last fortnight, with February contract with February Brent at \$17.55 yesterday and February Nymex light crude almost reaching \$19. Some analysts are beginning to feel confident that the rally will continue in the new year and at least one City investment bank has raised its forecast for next year to \$19.

That is a significant improvement on the year just ending: average crude prices for 1995 will come out at just above \$17 and there were periods in the early summer when predictions were almost \$1 lower. Confidence was given a boost at last month's Opec meeting in Vienna when the oil-producing states agreed to maintain production at current levels for a further six months but the principal cause of

the recent surge has been cold weather and stock movements. Traditionally, stocks build up before the Northern Hemisphere winter but this year inventory levels have been unusually low just as cold weather hit North America and Western Europe. At the same time, Asian refiners have been buying to satisfy demand for fuel oil. The fall in stock levels has been a feature of the oil market for some years as the pressure to reduce costs forces industry to move to just-in-time deliveries using the futures market to protect them from price movements. Forecasts of world oil demand for 1996 have increased by 500,000 barrels per day and if the cold weather continues, the oil price could spike further in the new year. That may encourage a continuation of the recent bid activity among North Sea oil companies.

British Airways

WITH the bidders for USAir out of the picture, British Airways has little incentive to increase its shareholding in the American carrier. Without a deal with its unions, USAir is still lumbered with excessive costs and the prospect of a USAir profit this year is a due to market forces rather than change within the airline.

Currently, the trend is up: international traffic at Heathrow should increase by 5 per cent and aircraft capacity is growing slowly. Even at current levels, BA shares are trading on a 23 per cent discount to the market based on forecasts of next year's earnings. However, investors who believe there is more value to chase should remember that BA's recovery was led by a huge reduction in overhead. Since

CRUISING ALTITUDE



Redland

REDLAND is slowly repairing its house and yesterday's bid for Enamix fills a few holes in the wall. Based in the East Midlands and East Anglia, Enamix fits well with Redland's own aggregates business, cutting the expensive cost of transport. It owns precious quarry reserves: these are at a premium since government planning laws put the brakes on further quarry excavations. Redland is still waiting for a public inquiry decision on its £70 million Isle of Harris superquarry. An undistinguished performance by incumbent management allows Redland to pick up Enamix cheaply and a stream of UK earnings is needed to help cut Redland's hefty ATC bill.

Enamix is too small to be the palliative for all Redland's ills. The company will need to make two or three more acquisitions before im-

MDIS

LESS than two years from its flotation and McDonnell Information Systems (MDIS) has issued its fourth profits warning. Such disasters prompt some immediate reflection and the need to allocate blame with the benefit of hindsight. Investors who bought the shares at 260p will be particularly annoyed because MDIS appeared to be sound. Backed by Barings - at that time thought to be a sensible institution - MDIS was sold as a software applications company that had the bene-

WALL STREET

turn revenue and a profitable track record. It was not selling video games or virtual reality, nor was it developing miracle cures for cancer. City names—including Ian Hay Davidson—were on the board.

In the end, its problems are typical of any software company: disappointing sales and the high cost of research and development. Such companies need to spend huge amounts to develop products, writing off costs immediately and then selling in a narrow window of opportunity before competition cuts into margins. MDIS attempted to differentiate itself by advertising contracted revenue of £174 million. The lesson for investors is to use their own judgment, pay no attention to the sponsor or the calibre of the non-executives. If you think software or biotech companies are dodgy, avoid them.

EDITED BY CARL MORTISHED

THE TIMES CITY DIARY

Food for thought

AFTER a particularly trying year, who could criticise the banking supervision department of the Bank of England for celebrating Christmas at the delightful Baha Thai restaurant in Soho? Nevertheless, the occupants of a neighbouring table caused momentary anxiety for one discreet official. "Where are you from?" he inquired. "We're from Shell," came the response. "Thank goodness, that's all right then," said the relieved banker.

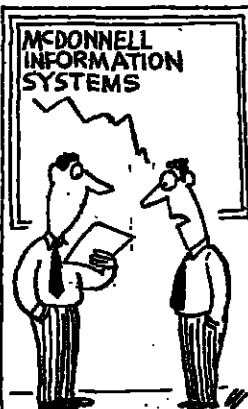
Another seasonal dirty: 'Tis the season to be merry. Mistletoe and holly berry. But the spiciest punch is at a Savoy lunch. As Rocco squares up to Gerry.

Going Dutch

ABN Amro Hoare Govett's festive quiz (*City Diary*, Wednesday) has been won by fund manager Richard Smith of Lazards. His prize is a magnum of Champagne and/or dinner with an analyst of his choice. Had he come third, Smith would have won half a bottle of Champagne and two dates with an analyst. Tie-breakers to complete the statement "ABN Amro Hoare Govett is my favourite broker because..." included "You're first in *Yellow Pages*," and "When I deal, I like to go Dutch".

No entry

WITH Christmas Eve almost upon us, for those who believe in Father Christmas (and who doesn't?) a hell of a problem looms. Real chimneys just ain't being built any more, and coal burners are going out of fashion. Royal Insurance Property Services says 154,600 new homes were built between January and October this year, of which only 20 per cent have real chimneys.



"Any other information apart from the usual profits warning?"

In the frame

WHETHER it is the Russian parliamentary election or pre-Christmas houses, the City is returning to an interest in Russian art after an absence of three years. West End dealer Roy Miles, of Bruton Street, is currently exhibiting more than 200 works, having visited Georgia, Minsk and Siberia. The red sale stickers on so many paintings have forced him to bring out the reserve collection, which includes a topical study by Viktor Tsigal of reindeer and huskies, which is on sale for £2,900.

Only one Bob

ROBERT AYLING, who might otherwise expect to be addressed as "Sir" when he takes up his new post as chief executive at British Airways on January 1, has sent out a directive to the troops that he should be known and addressed as "Bob". He is not being egalitarian. He simply doesn't want to be confused with another Robert Ayling in the airline industry who happens to be the sales manager for Maersk Air, a regional airline operating out of Birmingham which now flies in BA colours as a franchise operator and which used to be called Birmingham European.

COLIN CAMPBELL



Steve Garton's job of ensuring that customers get what they want, when they want it, depends on high-tech stock control and just-in-time supplies

How comfort and joy rely on sophisticated systems

As food shoppers prepare for the final push in out-of-town superstores, Philip Bassett looks behind the scenes

Today and tomorrow, the serious Christmas shopping gets done: not so much the last-minute buying of presents, but the laying-in of the cache of food without which no traditional British Christmas is complete — the sprouts, the pudding, the mince pies and above all the turkey. For most people, that means a trip to the supermarket — either in the high street or, increasingly, in the vast out-of-town superstores that lurk on Britain's ringroads.

But as they push their trolleys around the laden shelves, most people will be unaware of the huge and highly sophisticated industrial machine around them which is giving them the ability to select their purchases: the modern supermarket. Even in tough economic times, Britain is now a nation of shoppers. Giant shopping malls such as the Metro Centre in the North East or Lakeside in the South East are the citadels of modern consumerism.

Christmas is the height of it. Take last year. While Christmas 1994 was not regarded as a success by Britain's hard-pressed high street retailers, largely divorced from the now-faltering export sales that have fuelled the UK's slowing economic recovery, the sales surge was still apparent.

Government figures compiled by the Central Statistical Office show that on a seasonally unadjusted basis, retail sales leapt by a quarter between November and December last year, and then fell back by a third in January.

Non-food sales — in this case, the bulk of Christmas presents — leapt even higher, with a 40 per cent increase by value in December. Predominantly foodstore sales, including supermarkets, saw a more even buying pattern — even in tougher times, people still need to buy food — but even so, the December leap was 14 per cent, and the January drop 19 per cent.

For most shoppers struggling with the crowds in the last few days before Christmas, this year's surge will mean full car parks and sharp elbows in the last-minute rush to buy. What they will not notice, unless something goes wrong, is the complex means by which the big supermarket chains provide a huge range of choices.

Supermarkets, especially large out-of-town superstores, are now big industrial centres. The biggest employ large numbers of people — 600, 700 or more. Apart from hospitals and local authorities, few sites in Britain — especially in manufacturing industry — now employ that number of people in one place.

Food retailing has been at the forefront in creating jobs. According to London Economics, the research body, employment in the sector has risen by 11 per cent since the early 1980s, providing badly needed jobs as Britain emerged from recession, and considerably outstripping the overall rate of jobs growth in the economy.

That may be slowed now, with a marked shift in government policy. Ministers have become increasingly concerned about the impact on town centres of large supermarket chains moving out to ringroad stores. John Gummer, the Environment Secretary, put forward new proposals on planning guidance for retail developments in the summer, arguing for what he calls the "sequential" approach: "Retail develop-

ment plans should look first to town centres, next edge-of-centre sites and only then out-of-centre sites, if no suitable sites are available."

After consultation in which his proposals were overwhelmingly supported, Mr Gummer is expected to issue revised planning guidance in the new year. Retailers, which have for some time been experiencing difficulties in obtaining planning permission for ringroad stores, believe that the golden age of out-of-town superstore development is already over.

Such larger-scale political and planning questions, of course, mean little to those shoppers battling in the supermarket aisles today. Supermarkets are competing ferociously for market share to get people into their shops, and once there, they want them to buy as much and as easily as possible. Some offer loyalty cards and provide shopping packers; the latest TV adverts from KwikSave, for instance, explicitly reject such moves in favour of old-fashioned but powerful competition on price.

One of the flagship out-of-town stores of Tesco, the market leader which has 520 stores around the country, is a short drive from the company's headquarters in Cheshunt, on the M25. Built in the brick ranch-house style characteristic of the company, Cheshunt No 2 as it is known — Tesco has a town centre store in Cheshunt as well — has a normal flow of customers of 50,000 a week, and more in the run-up to Christmas.

Unusually, the store shares a site

with Marks & Spencer, which was late into the out-of-town boom. Having repositioned itself, Tesco now has the highest proportion of AB customers, though half of all ABs use M&S for their "secondary" food shopping of luxury and prepared foods. At Cheshunt, the two combine by M&S mainly sticking to clothes, and Tesco — which has about 160 stores selling clothes — mainly doing food. Steve Garton is Tesco's manager at the store. Now 32, he started with Tesco's in a weekend part-time job, and has returned to the store where he was originally a trainee. His job is to ensure that customers get what they want, when they want it.

Twenty years ago, supermarkets used to be a relatively simple affair. Often, deliveries would be weekly, with goods stacked up in expensive warehouse space behind the store. Now, the inner workings of an out-of-town store such as Cheshunt bear closer resemblance to a modern car factory run by, say, Toyota or Rover.

Even at Christmas, when the main but still small lines of storage space behind the store are racked up with extra dry goods such as Christmas crackers and toys, the amount of goods warehoused by the store is tiny. Instead, everything is delivered using the Japanese just-in-time system, with goods — no longer manhandled in boxes, but in easily wheeled wire cages — rolling off the lorries straight into the store in a constant stream.



High street spending is expected to total £7 billion by Christmas day

Such military-style supply, heavily driven by the greatly increased provision of fresh goods, is now largely computer-controlled. When an item's bar code is read at a checkout, not only is the price logged on the customer's itemised bill, but its purchase is recorded in the computerised ordering system, which automatically registers the need to replace it. So staple items are constantly being reordered and replenished, and the shelves which display the store's 19,000 product lines are kept full.

It allows, too, for a running check on takings, so that the level of business is endlessly monitored. On a pre-Christmas visit, the receptionist inside the staff entrance announced at 2pm that the day's takings were already up by £2,000 on the same day a week earlier.

Although shop hours have increased with a change in the law and driven by customer demand — today Cheshunt will be open until 10pm — superstores could cope with even longer hours. "This is a 24-hour-a-day, seven-days-a-week operation," says Mr Garton — from the small army of contract cleaners who will move in tonight after the store closes to tomorrow's bread, which will start to arrive soon afterwards, in time for a 7.30am opening.

But if Christmas marks a surge in shopping, it marks a surge in shoplifting too. Just inside the staff entrance, a seasonal notice warns staff to be aware of the increase prompted by the time of year, including "pushing through" — customers loading goods from the shelves straight into the plastic bags which can be bought to fit shopping trolleys and barging straight through the checkouts to hurl the stolen goods into waiting cars outside.

Such brazen theft is complemented by more sophisticated stealing techniques. Cheshunt recently managed to catch someone who every week had been clearing the store's entire display of plastic razors — staggeringly, about £1,000-worth of plastic razors are normally on show — straight into bags. Light, easy to handle — unlike more expensive but bulky items, such as whisky — he was then selling them on each week at car boot sales.

This kind of theft leaves its mark on a large store's takings at Christmas. Even so, Tesco's Cheshunt superstore is likely to see its £1 million-plus weekly turnover rise by up to 75 per cent in the pre-Christmas period. Mintel, the marketing analyst, believes that high street spending will total something like £7 billion by Christmas day.

Such big numbers, and big profits — Tesco's own UK operating profit in its latest half-year rose by 15 per cent to £290 million — requires the complex level of industrial organisation on which modern superstores now depend, but which today's and tomorrow's customers should see little of. "It's a great pleasure to me to come in and see it all working," says Mr Garton, surveying his store. "It's great to come round first thing and see everything ready to go."

All in Cheshunt, and every other one of Britain's ringroad superstores, the sophisticated industrial process which a modern superstore secretly embodies will ensure that everything will be ready this morning for the final push before Christmas.

Flying free has never been more expensive

The National Lottery watchdog risked his job for \$7,000, says Jon Ashworth

From the moment Peter Davis touched down in Austin, Texas, one evening in October 1994, he was entering a different world. Outside the terminal, a stretch limousine was waiting, ready to whisk him to the plush Four Seasons hotel, on a bluff overlooking the Colorado River. It was a moment to savour.

Little more than a year later, Mr Davis would live to regret that trip. His admission that he accepted free jet and helicopter flights from GTEch, the American lottery company, caused a storm at Westminster, and threatened the entire fabric of the National Lottery. As the dust settled, it has emerged that his position as lottery regulator was jeopardised for the sake of a mere \$7,000.

Details obtained by *The Times* show that Mr Davis made three flights on a Cessna Citation III executive jet, one of two belonging to GTEch. He also made four flights on a GTEch helicopter, which has been identified as an Italian-made Agusta A109.

Mr Davis boarded the Citation at Austin on Thursday, October 20, bound for Tallahassee, Florida, where he was due to meet state lottery officials. GTEch had put the \$7 million aircraft at his disposal to help to meet an uncomfortably tight schedule.

Mr Davis accepted after seeking the advice of colleagues at Oflot, and despite National Heritage guidelines warning of the dangers of accepting complimentary flights. From Tallahassee, he flew to Atlanta, before flying on to New York the following morning.

Aviation sources say the flight from Texas to Florida would have clocked up \$1,646 in running costs, based on standard industry figures. The hours-long flight to Atlanta cost \$650, and the final leg to Teterboro, New Jersey, took a little under two hours, and ran up costs of \$1,523. The total expense to GTEch would have been in the region of \$3,800.

Research indicates that it is quite possible to cover the itinerary using regular carriers. Mr Davis could have caught a Delta Air Lines flight from Austin to Tallahassee via Atlanta, depart-

ing at 6.15am and arriving at 10.55am, before returning to Atlanta later in the day. On Friday, he could have flown on to Newark, New Jersey, arriving at 12.30pm. A Business Class fare on the above routes costs £1,061, compared with the \$3,800 (£2,460) estimated cost of the GTEch jet. At Teterboro, a five-seat Agusta A109 helicopter was waiting, a GTEch pilot at the controls. Mr Davis was soon flying down the Hudson River, marveling at the Manhattan skyline, as the West Side heliport loomed. He was taken to the Wall Street offices of Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette, where his old acquaintance, Carl Menges, greeted him.

Later that day, Mr Davis was reunited with his wife, Vanessa, who had flown over on United Airlines to stay with Cordelia Menges, with whom she has a 20-year friendship. The Davises returned to West Side, and joined the Mengeses on the Agusta for the 100-mile hop to East Hampton on Long Island. Mr Davis then flew to Albany for talks with local officials, returning on the Sunday.

The four helicopter flights covered 370 nautical miles, and incurred about three hours of flight time, at a maximum cost to GTEch of \$3,000. Direct operating costs on the A109 are about \$500 an hour, but they can rise to \$1,000 an hour once fuel, insurance and service charges are taken into consideration. The A109 was the first twin-turbine helicopter designed for high-speed corporate transportation. About 500 have been sold worldwide since the aircraft was certified in 1975.

State lottery officials paid for Mr Davis's meals during his whirlwind visit. He paid for hotel accommodation himself, charging rooms to his American Express card, and keeping a meticulous record of his expenses. International flights were paid by Oflot. Based on the above estimates, Mr Davis's controversial jet and helicopter flights cost GTEch no more than \$7,000 — small beer for a corporation which boasts a pre-tax income of \$93 million a year. The cost to Mr Davis could have been immeasurably higher.

6 Admission threatened the entire fabric of the lottery

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British Gas and a pattern of conflict with ministers

From Mr Noel Falconer
Sir, Graham Searjeant argues ("Pattern of state betrayal", December 16) that the Government crippled British Gas. It did.

It was aided by executives guilty of a world worse than alienating BGas shareholders by incompetents still clinging to high office and the high salaries that nobody else would dream of paying them.

BGas has been at loggerheads with the Government for a decade. Of course the DTI should have resolved this. The prime failure remains the self-indulgence, the arrogant intransigence, of BGas. In repeated confrontations that culminated in its chief executive misteading a

Select Committee of the House of Commons.

The penalty was that entirely foreseeable consequences of ministerial decisions were not addressed.

No politician knowingly alienates millions of shareholders — they, and their families, have votes! So the Government did not know of those huge forward contracts, and certainly did not appreciate their implications, when it removed the monopoly of their gas was to supply BGas was too busy bawling to tell it, and it too angry with BGas to listen.

This aside, entering into contracts for tens of billions and across decades, but without escape clauses or provision for renegotiation, was

crazy. Especially when BGas knew these might well be needed!

I myself warned that atmospheric warming looked plausible, that the series of warm winters could be more than a statistical aberration. The replies indicated that at least some BGas managers agreed, and accepted that the very possibility rendered precautions wise. But unwelcome decisions would have had to be taken earlier, and the board closed its eyes.

BGas is led by the main authors of its misfortunes. Yours faithfully,
NOEL FALCONER,
223 Bramhall Moor Lane,
Hazel Grove,
Stockport.

Harking back to Palace of dreams

From Mr Barry Barron.

Sir, As a senior, senior citizen I recall the Strand Palace Hotel with affection. Her name was Susie, the prettiest "nippy" of the time.

I have fond memories, too, of the Savoy Orpheans, Jack Payne at the Cecil, Ben Blue at the Tricity Restaurant, and a hat-check maiden at Romano's.

All in the enchanted Strand at the same time.
Yours faithfully,
BARRY BARRON,
36 Homer Street,
W1.

Kitchen tales

From Mr Adrian Dence
Sir, As a newly qualified food technologist and management trainee, with J Lyons in the early 1960s, my first training period was spent in the basement butchery beneath the Coventry Street Corner House. I can vouch for the quality of the beef I cut up for Lord Brightman (Letters, December 15). However, the standards of food hygiene left something to be desired. I well remember one morning at dawn in the confectionery department opening a box of margarine to find a cockroach enjoying an early breakfast.

Yours faithfully,
ADRIAN DENCE,
26 Hainfield Drive,
Solihull, West Midlands.

Letters to the Business and Finance section of *The Times* can be sent by fax on 0171-782 5112.

Offering the CBI a word to the wise on sterling

From Mr Geoffrey Mills
Sir, The chief economic adviser to the CBI (Women join panel of the wise men, December 20) would like sterling to fall another 3 per cent. Why not 4 per cent, or 40, or 85?

Since the late 1960s sterling has fallen about 85 per cent in relation to serious currencies: from 1,000-plus yen to about 150; from 11-

plus DM to about 2.2; and from 12 Swiss francs to 1.8. And now we have trade deficits, despite all that lovely North Sea oil and gas.

Could someone please tell the CBI.
Yours faithfully,
GEOFFREY MILLS,
43 Whetstone Close,
Edgbaston,
Birmingham.

THE TIMES UNIT TRUST INFORMATION SERVICE

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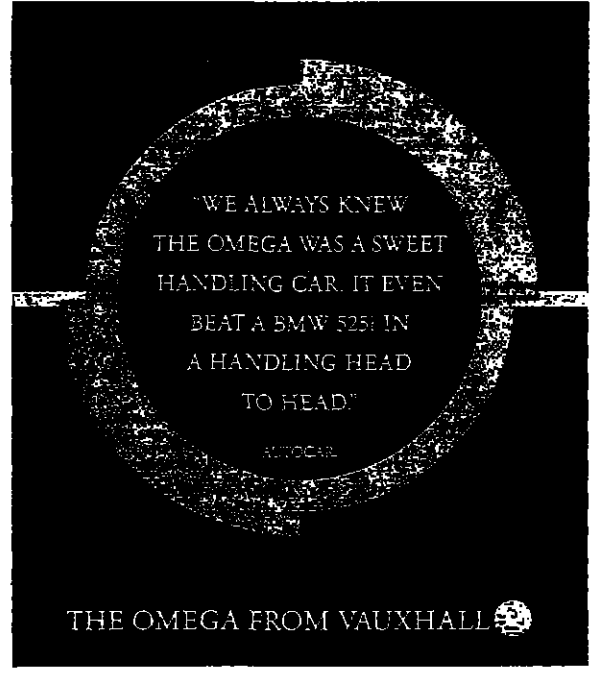
Shares rise after roller-coaster day

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
BANKS						
279.7	277.7	ABN-AMRO	278.5	+0.8	+0.3	10.8
279.7	277.7	ABN-AMRO	278.5	+0.8	+0.3	10.8
279.7	277.7	ABN-AMRO	278.5	+0.8	+0.3	10.8
DISTRIBUTORS						
107.7	107.7	ADM (US)	107.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
107.7	107.7	ADM (US)	107.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
107.7	107.7	ADM (US)	107.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
BREWERIES						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
BUILDING & CONSTRUCT						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
ELECTRICITY						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
ELECTRONIC & ELECT						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
BUILDING MATERIALS						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
BUSINESS SERVICES						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
CHEMICALS						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
ENGINEERING, VEHICLES						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
FOOD MANUFACTURERS						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
HEALTHCARE						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
HOUSEHOLD GOODS						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
INSURANCE						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
MEDIA						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
OTHER FINANCIAL						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
BRITISH FUNDS						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
SHORTS (under 5 years)						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
LONGS (over 10 years)						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
UNDATED						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
INDEX-LINKED (on projected inflation of 10%)						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
MEDIUMS (10 to 15 years)						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
INVESTMENT TRUSTS						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
PHARMACEUTICALS						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
SPIRITS, WINES & CIGARS						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
PRINTING & PAPER						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
SUPPORT SERVICES						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
PROPERTY						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
TELECOMMUNICATIONS						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
TEXTILES & APPAREL						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
RETAILERS, FOOD						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
TRANSPORT						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
RETAILERS, GENERAL						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
WATER						
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8
135.7	135.7	AB InBev	135.7	0.0	0.0	10.8



EDUCATION

It takes more than good intentions to turn primary school children into linguists, says Kate Weidmann

Familiar foreign policy

When I started secondary school, I sat in my first French class surrounded by little girls from preparatory schools, all of whom had learnt the language before. A few years later my younger brother came home from primary school and announced that he was now learning French.

So when the Labour Party promises to "develop the teaching of foreign languages in primary schools to boost children's linguistic skills", the education system has been down that road before.

In the early 1960s, newspaper headlines blared "In Ten Years Our Children Will be Bilingual" as the Nuffield French from Eight project began in British primary schools. Rather less than ten years later the Burstall report noted that pupils who had started French at eight did not perform noticeably better by 16 than pupils who had a later start, and that in reading and writing they may even have performed less well. By the mid 1970s, French had all but fizzled out in the primary school curriculum, apart from prep schools and extracurricular clubs. So, 20 years later, here we are again.

The last MORI poll on the subject found "virtually unanimous" support among a cross-section of parents for an early start. "It's bound to be a vote-catcher in middle-class marginals," says Tony Roberts, head of modern foreign languages at London University's Institute of Education. "But it's going to need serious investment in teachers if it's to be done effectively."

So parents want it, and there is a perception that Britain is falling behind the rest of Europe. Labour's document *Excellence for Everyone* says: "In other European countries, it is common for primary school children to learn one or two languages in addition to their native



Overcoming the language barrier — pupils at Ferryden Primary School in Montrose

tongue." But Labour appears to have overlooked something that has been happening on its doorstep. In 1989, a national pilot project with parallel regional pilots was introduced in more than 200 Scottish primary schools, and by 1993 it was decided to extend this to all primary schools north of the border. Tuition was first given only to the top class at primary level, then subsequently for the two top years.

Primary schools were offered four languages: French, German, Spanish and Italian. "There was a determination not to put all the Scottish eggs in the French basket," says Professor Richard Johnstone, one of the leaders of Stirling

University's research into the project.

Initially, secondary school language teachers visited primary schools and conducted the classes. In 1993 there was a shift towards training the primary teachers to conduct the language teaching, with 370 teachers attending a 27-day training course. Last year, another 800 went on the course. The stated aim of the Scottish Office Education Department is to have at least one teacher qualified to teach a foreign language in each of Scotland's 2,336 primary schools by 1997.

Results so far from the Scottish pilot project show that pupils have an advantage in

pronunciation and intonation and show a general willingness to "have a go" in secondary school. There was no evidence of an increase in grammatical accuracy. When the first project pupils reached their Standard Grade exams (roughly equivalent to GCSEs) a wider range and larger number of students took the exams than in previous years "at no cost to the school's performance in comparison with previous years with more selected groups of pupils", says Professor Johnstone.

However, preliminary reports on the Scottish project emphasise the two factors that were judged to have caused the failure of the 1960s

Nuffield project: the need for continuity and momentum between what a pupil learns in primary school and what goes on in secondary school, and also how competent the primary school teacher is in the foreign language concerned. The schools involved in the Scottish pilot were not a representative sample. They were seen as "forward-looking", volunteering to take part. With any special project, extra effort is made, extra funds are available. Class teachers made the effort, for example, to take registers, count lunches and do some PE activities in the foreign language, and expected students to frame requests in it. But as one report points out: "If the gains of the pilot project are to be generalised across the country, it will be necessary for primary school teachers to show confidence, spontaneity, fluency, accuracy and range in their use of the foreign language."

The scheme begs the question of how to overcome the current shortage in trained secondary language teachers, which may simply be displaced by creating the same problem in primary schools.

Robert Evans, Labour education spokesman at the European Parliament and a former primary teacher, acknowledges that "it will take a generation to change — we've got to follow through and invest".

The vote of primary teachers who went through the Nuffield project last time around will probably depend on the answer to where the money is to come from. Parents interviewed this week were largely in favour: "I feel quite strongly about it, it should be part of the curriculum, not optional"; "children have to become open to the idea that other people speak differently"; "if they don't have this, aren't they all just going to end up shouting louder?"



Louise Woolcock: "How do I feel about making history? You just do what you have to"

Breaking the mould

David Charter
on how Rugby's
first head girl
coped with the
controversy

A kiss from the New Zealand rugby star Jonah Lomu helped to convince Louise Woolcock she was right to ignore her critics and become the first head girl in Rugby School's 428-year history.

Louise, 18, endured a storm of protests by boys at the £12,720-a-year independent school in Warwickshire when her appointment was announced this summer. Half of the 500 male pupils refused to attend a service for Thomas Arnold, the school's reforming Head Master, and senior boys distributed leaflets and posters criticising the decision.

But Louise, who is serving as joint head of school with classmate Huw Brown, had the last laugh on the church chapel boycotters when she won the endorsement of the world's biggest rugby celebrity on a visit to the birthplace of the game.

She has also won praise for her conduct this term from staff and pupils, which has ensured there has been no repetition of the animosity towards her.

"At the end of last year, about half the boys boycotted chapel on the morning it was announced. They put up posters and contacted the press. At first I took it personally, then I received anonymous letters saying 'It's not personal: it's not that

we don't like you'. I remember thinking, I wish I was a boy as there would not have been the same sort of outcry and hype."

However, Louise never wavered in her determination to take up the post. "They soon realised it was not going to get them anywhere. Now they have decided it is not that bad after all. There has been a positive atmosphere in the school this term," she says.

Louise's appointment coincided with the first year that girls were represented in all years at the traditionally all-male school. Her main duties include showing prospective parents around the school and attending an endless round of meetings to prepare for the Christmas concert or memorial service. Her evenings can be taken up at other parents' functions, dining with members of the school's different boarding houses, or listening to pupils' concerns. Some weeks this means

that all her free time is devoted to extracurricular duties, which are squeezed around her studies for three A levels in biology, chemistry and mathematics. She is aiming for a place at Bristol to read medicine.

Robert Montgomerie, the deputy headmaster, says Louise and Huw work well as a team. Her duties included reading a lesson at the town Christmas service and reorganising the running of the school bar. She also has to order boys off the rugby pitch if they do not have permission to walk across it.

Mr Montgomerie says: "We may have the odd male chauvinist pig here, but we haven't had the protests that occurred at the time she was appointed. Her appointment has gone so well that it has set a precedent we might well be happy to follow."

Jonah Lomu visited at the end of last month. Louise says: "I was in the welcoming committee and showed him around the school, including where the first ball was picked up. I got three kisses from him, which was very exciting."

But she does not feel like a pioneer. "People say, how does it feel changing history, but on a day-to-day basis it does not feel like that, you just do what you have to do."

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POSTS

The Funding Agency for Schools has been in business since April 1994. It has responsibility for funding and planning almost 1100 grant-maintained schools. These are the schools which have opted out of their local education authorities (LEAs).

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For an informal discussion please ring Jackie Farnell on (01904) 661405. Application form and further details available from Laura Murray (Personnel and Services Directorate) on 01904 661665 (24 hour answer phone). Closing date: 3 January 1996. Interviews will be held within two weeks of that date.

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WATSON GORDON CHAIR of FINE ART

The University Court invites applications from candidates in any field of art history for the Watson Gordon Chair of Fine Art in the Department of Fine Art. This Chair is now advertised as a result of Professor Eric Fernie's appointment as Director of the Courtauld Institute of Art. The Chair will be tenable from 1 October 1996 or as soon as possible thereafter.

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Please quote REF: 71 590582

Further particulars of the post may be obtained from

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with whom applications (12 copies), including curriculum vitae and the names of three referees, should be lodged. Overseas candidates need submit only one copy of the application which may be submitted by Fax (+44 131 650 6509). Applicants are asked to ensure that confidential reports are received from their referees by the same date.

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DANCE

The Royal Ballet's glamorous star, Sylvie Guillem, sets out to woo an audience of millions



MUSIC

Christmas is celebrated with a superb series of choral concerts in Smith Square

THE TIMES ARTS



TOMORROW

Will Richard Eyre's National Theatre brains beat the RSC in the battle of thespian wits?



NEXT WEEK

The greatest turkeys of stage and screen are fondly recalled by Times critics

Beginners welcome to a ballet masterclass

Do you want to dance? For three nights next week on BBC2 Sylvie Guillem will show you how. John Percival reports

Sylvie Guillem — everyone knows that she is the dancer who swings her foot up higher than her head. Actually, she does a lot of other things, and more interesting things too, and people switching on for her BBC2 mini-series starting on Tuesday are in for a surprise if they expect the standard tights, tutu and pointe shoes.

In fact, you do get the ballet shoes and the short frilly skirt, but all in black, and worn with a casual top, bare legs, and long hair falling all over her face. The contortions she puts her body through while introducing and wrapping up each programme are just as startlingly unusual, but accompanied by her own voice-over explaining her ideas about dance and movement.

Is she afraid that viewers, unless they are experts, might have problems understanding the programmes? "No," she says with a smile. "I think the experts might have problems, but people who don't usually watch dance might enjoy them, especially if they are interested in films."

Part of her purpose, indeed, is to show how dance relates to other kinds of movement. For this reason she includes a long episode in which the actions of a dancer, David Kern from the Frankfurt Ballet, and an actress, Benedicte Loyer, are interspersed with archive sequences assembled by film director Françoise Ha Van. These include newsreels and dramas on the one hand, Ulanova's *Swan Lake* and the historic German expressive dancer Mary Wigman on the other, with the incomparable Buster Keaton occupying a fascinating middle ground.

"You notice the shots of Muhammad Ali training?" she asks. "You can't hear what he is saying, but actually it is 'I'm a dancer, man, I am a dancer'. I like that."

The three half-hour programmes were about a year in the planning and making (fitted in with many other engagements along the way). The original approach came from the French station France 2, with BBC2 as co-producers, and Guillem told them flatly that she would be interested only if she were given her head to choose choreographers and film-makers whose work she found sympathetic.

"I am not saying these are the only good choreographers around," she says, "but they were ones I wanted to work with now. If we get the chance again, maybe I will choose somebody different."

Among the choreographers this time is Jonathan Burrows, who left the Royal Ballet to run his own group. He has made a solo for Guillem to dance in programme three. Called *Blue Yellow*, and set to a string quartet by Kevin Volans, it is a complete contrast to what anyone associates with Guillem: all quiet steps, gestures and hesitations in the minimalist

manner which has become one of Burrows's specialties.

Once the piece was ready, the film-maker Adam Roberts was given a free hand to shoot it as he liked. He chose to do so chiefly through doorways, so that the dancer sometimes goes out of view as she prowls in circles, and viewers may get a sense of coming upon the dance accidentally.

The biggest of the new works, *Smoke*, is in programme one: a 20-minute two-hander by the Swedish choreographer Mats Ek in which his brother, Niklas Ek (a former star with the Cullberg and Bejart Ballets and Netherlands Dance Theatre), explores different relationships with Guillem. Although she had worked with Mats Ek before, she had never met Niklas and is full of enthusiasm for his quality as a dancer and personality. "He's a bit crazy, which I like. That air of complete innocence — it's just him, he's really like that. And you know, he's 52. I hope my body will still be as flexible when I reach that age."

Mats Ek has done a lot of television work before, and directed himself for the screen, although he will now adapt the work for the stage. Finding equivalents for some of the special effects will be a problem: not just the dancers' hair or clothes, but Guillem's instantaneous costume changes. These may be easy enough for the camera (just stop and restart) but she admits that they were one of the most trying things for her. "It's not easy to take up exactly the same position again when you have reached it by moving about rather freely like this."

Surprisingly, Guillem chose not to dance in the new solo that she asked William Forsythe to make for programme two. It surprised Forsythe too when she asked him to dance himself. "I said I would like him in the programme, but at first he did not want to appear, and said, 'I've never made a solo for myself. I'm too old now. It's too long since I performed.'"

But Guillem's determination eventually exceeded his. "I persuaded him to improvise in the studio, and let himself be filmed while doing it. I think it's amazing, the energy of his dancing."

The film-maker was Thomas Balogh ("I call him the Kid because he's so young") — that from Guillem, barely out of her twenties, who used different camera angles for contrasted views of Forsythe's tough but fluent dancing, which he then edited with a free hand to produce the remarkable end product.

"We all had to trust each other," Guillem says. "But without taking some risks, you can't have art."

She admits to fear every time she goes on stage, which might seem unexpected from a dancer who can look so confident and controlled, but helps to explain the high tension of her performances. And



Stepping out of character: Sylvie Guillem confounds her popular image with quiet steps and gestures in Jonathan Burrows's minimalist *Blue Yellow*

A CHOICE OF CHRISTMAS ARTS PROGRAMMES ON TELEVISION

TOMORROW

● *Coppélia*. Sir Peter Wright's swansong, as he bowed out of Birmingham Royal Ballet, was a new production of this evergreen. It was recorded in May at Covent Garden, on the 125th anniversary of the first performance. BBC2, 7pm

● *Tx*. Fiona Shaw reads Eliot's *The Waste Land*, directed by Deborah Warner. April is the cruellest month, but BBC2's December doesn't seem too cheery either. BBC2, 8.40pm

● *Unplugged* — Bob Dylan. More walling and gnashing of teeth from the veteran songman. BBC2, 11.25pm

● *The Three Tenors*. They're back! That magical night of top Cs and supercharged egos, in the baths at Rome, is replayed for any fans who

have not yet bought the video. Channel 4, 9pm

● *Christmas in Vienna 1995*. And guess what? Here's Domingo and Carreras again, though Pavarotti is this time impersonated, slightly improbably, by Natalie Cole. Commentary by Paul Gambaccini. BBC2, 4.30pm

● *Unplugged* — Phil Collins. Now it's his turn to show that he doesn't really need all those wires. BBC2, 11.45pm

● *The Caballé Family Christmas* with Cher. Yes, opera star Montserrat Caballé, plus her singing daughter, join Cher and News at Ten anchorman Trevor McDonald, for a cosy yuletide sing-song. ITV, 10.25pm

CHRISTMAS DAY

● *The Greatest Music Party in the World*. But not so great, apparently, that the BBC feels it should be screened before midnight. Bowie, Stewart, Ross and other veteran talents rub shoulders with slightly younger acts. BBC1, 12.05am

● *La Bohème*. Baz Luhrmann, of *Strictly Ballroom* fame, directed this Australian Opera production of the Puccini weepie, updating the action to the Paris of Sartre. BBC2, 3.10pm

● *Some Enchanted Evening*. Your host at this celebration of Broadway lyricist Oscar Hammerstein, born 100 years ago, is Julie Andrews. Who better to lead us gently through the winsome ditties of *South Pacific*, *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel* and of

course *The Sound of Music*? BBC2, 5.35pm

● *England, My England*. John Osborne's last screenplay is ostensibly about the life of Restoration composer Henry Purcell, but dips into the 1960s to allow some characteristically vitriolic asides. Tony Palmer's starry cast includes Simon Callow and Robert Stephens. Channel 4, 9.05pm

BOXING DAY

● *Dido and Aeneas*. More Purcell to round out his tercentenary year. But don't expect a straight staging of his masterpiece. This is the version choreographed by Mark Morris, with Morris himself dancing the role of Dido and the Sorceress. Channel 4, 3.15pm

RICHARD MORRISON

LONDON CONCERTS: Fine choirs dispense seasonal cheer in Smith Square; Romantics get period treatment on the South Bank

Ten ways to sing 'Hail Mary'

Polyphony St John's

There can be few nicer times to spend Christmas than in the company of Polyphony and Stephen Layton. They take themselves rather less seriously than some choirs I know: can you really imagine a choirmaster such as Peter Phillips or Paul McCreesh turning round to take the solo in *White Christmas*?

Yet they take their music seriously enough to perform Palestrina every bit as assiduously and stylishly as "there's never been such a day in Beverly Hills LA". And they are so young, that I can (and will) safely hire them for my funeral.

For this Christmas concert in Smith Square, Polyphony chose to "sing of a maiden that is makes". Ave Maria, the programme was called and, after processing in to easy yet robust plainsong, the singers performed Palestrina's *Missa Ave Maria* with its movements separated by later settings of the prayer.

So after a joyfully brisk Kyrie, Palestrina's paraphrase of the opening plainchant, and a Gloria of stentor-like entries, Bruckner's motet *Ave Maria* purred its way out, the male-voice lines wonderfully distanced, as if from another dimension. Then Villa-Lobos, bass-led; as melancholy as a painting by El Greco.

Even in vibrato-less Palestrina, Polyphony is not afraid to make the human voice



Polyphony: quality voices that can move from Palestrina to Irving Berlin with ease

human — rather than act as an instrumental apology for itself. The choir has a properly resonant bass line (no choral-scholar braying), sharp-edged by reedy altos.

After Palestrina's *Sanctus* came Verdi's *Ave Maria* — echoes of *Otello* in tenderly imagined modulations — and

the jolly, Eastern orthodoxy of Stravinsky. After the interval, it was carol time. Percy Grainger, at his most sugar-spun, was represented by his *Sussex Hummers* Carol and this hummed straight into the buoyant, asymmetrical lilt of Peter Warlock's *As dew in*

HILARY FINCH

THE annual Magenta Music International Christmas Festival at St John's Smith Square is now a well-established part of the countdown to the big day and, like the traditional advent calendar, each concert opens a door to fresh musical delights. On Tuesday night the Sixteen, under its director Harry Christophers, presented a programme of less familiar seasonal music that ranged from medieval carols to work by Britten, Howells and Respighi.

Perhaps the best known work in the concert was Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols*, a work conceived with boys' voices in mind. My heart sank a little when a trio of counter-tenors appeared at the end of the opening procession. The sopranos of the Sixteen combine a choir-boy purity of tone with the musical finesse

Delights behind the Advent doors

The Sixteen St John's

of adult professionals but the sound of the counter-tenor is worlds away from the boy alto. In the event, I need not have worried; the men were not at all intrusive and added weight to the faster, louder numbers such as *Adam Lay a Boun*. The virtuoso harp accompaniment was brilliant, dispatched by Sioned Williams, and the performance as a whole was as highly polished as a holly berry.

Like *A Ceremony of Carols*, Respighi's *Hymn of Praise for the Birth of the Lord* inhabits a distinctive sound world and is equally imbued with the composer's personality. The forces are somewhat larger — woodwind, piano, and percussion accompany the full choir — but it shares with the Britten the intimate, timeless qualities which are so appropriate to the Nativity, reinforced here by snatches of plainchant, a strong modal element and archaic-sounding contrapuntal writing. The *Hymn of Praise* is more a cantata-like telling of the ado-

ration of the shepherds, in which rustic oboes and buffoons dominate Respighi's chanting score.

Here, and throughout the programme, the Sixteen (actually the 21 on this occasion) demonstrated that it is what might previously have been thought impossible: a choir of soloists. In particular, I will single out Sally Dunkley (Mary in Respighi's playlet), whose modest demeanour belies her considerable ability as a soloist.

The three carols by Herbert Howells drew the best choral singing of the evening; the Sixteen's accuracy of pitch and focus of tone enhanced the lushness of Howells's intricate harmonies.

A Christmas gift for all who were present.

TESS KNIGHTON

Fine show of the flowers of Romance

DESPITE its name, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment has been making excursions into 19th-century repertoire with more thoroughness than any other major "period" band. On Wednesday the players presented an interesting programme of Romantic works all written before 1850.

Berwald, Mendelssohn and Schumann were the featured composers. It was perhaps not surprising to find the rising young Estonian conductor Paavo Järvi playing Berwald: his father, Neeme, has long been a champion of this pioneering Swedish composer. But the younger conductor proved himself a persuasive interpreter in his own right, and indeed disclosed musi-

OAE/Järvi QEH

cianship of individuality and authority. It is not hard to see why Järvi, who already holds two conducting posts in Sweden and will become principal guest conductor of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra next season, is in increasing demand around the world.

In Berwald's third symphony ("Sinfonie singuliere"), Järvi did his best to stress the work's originality, but he could do little with the opening movement — he was not helped by some tentative ensemble here — where the flashes of inspiration are only

intermittent. But he caught the languid mood of the Adagio, showed humour in the Scherzo and drove a fiery account of the Finale. Once the orchestra had settled down, its "period" instruments were a positive asset, with softer-grained strings and rasping winds and brass ideal in the transparent textures of a composer sensitive to northern light.

The Mendelssohn Violin Concerto gave Järvi more expressive scope, as he set fastidiously but always flexible tempos. Thomas Zehetmair gave an intense, poetic account of the solo part, dispatching the virtuosos passages with ease. The Andante, though, lacked a little elegance: in some overwrought moments Zehetmair

dug with pressure into phrases, with resulting wayward intonation.

Most rewarding of all was Schumann's Second Symphony. Järvi made a strong case for a work that has been dismissed as the weakest of the composer's symphonies. He seemed to relish the underlying unease, and unleashed a mighty struggle in the turbulent opening. Tension was maintained in the middle movements — even the sunniest passages of the Scherzo and the poignant Adagio were restless — but Järvi drew incisive, exhilarating playing that allowed the music to break through in triumphant affirmation at the close.

JOHN ALLISON



CHOICE

Verdi's tragic
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BOXING DAY

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guide to the
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THE TIMES
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Stories of
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entertainment
in Kilburn



THEATRE 2

... but in
Wimbledon a
lavishly tacky
staging can't
revive a feebly
scripted Aladdin

LONDON

MAD HATTER'S CONCERT. Join the Mad Hatter and the London Concert Orchestra tomorrow for lots of jolly music, some special songs and lots of treats, including Alice and her friends before the show. Later on, there are a few seats left for The Glory of Christmas. Barham, St. Paul, EC2 0JF 0171-638 8881. Sat, 3pm and 8pm. (S)

WILBERT'S PARTY. One of America's classic comedies, Bob Wilbert, comes on his holiday festivities with special guests Tommy White tonight and Kenny Baker and Dave Cliff tomorrow. Plaza on the Park, 11 Knightsbridge, SW1 0JF 0171-235 5593/3272. 9.15 and 11.15pm. (S)

FAIRY DUST AND SPARKLES. Ben Stevenson's staging of The Nutcracker for English National Ballet is the perfect antidote for post-Christmas anguish. Wonderful! Ivelly, complete with flying pastry cooks and trees that grow and grow, and great fun for everyone. The London Concert Orchestra offers a Christmas Eve gala, with tenor Benvenuto Baldoni as one of the stars. Festival Hall, South Bank, SE1 0JF 0171-360 4242. Today and tomorrow, 2.30 and 7.30pm. Sun, 2.30pm. (S)

COMPANY. Adrian Lester, Sheila Gish, Sophie Thompson in an excellent staging of Sondheim's beloved musical on mime, pro and com. Donmar Warehouse, Easton Street, WC2 0JF 0171-369 1721. Mon-Sat, 7.30pm, mat. Wed and Sat, 3pm. (S)

DEAD FUNNY. Belinda Lang, Kevin McNulty and Sam Kelly in Terry Johnson's sharply funny play about comedy and some of their fans. Swanley, Swanley, SE10 0JF 0171-636 8889. Mon-Fri, 8pm, Sat, 8.15pm, mat. Wed, 2.30pm and Sat, 5pm. (S)

THE GLASS MENAGERIE. Sam Mendes' radiant production, Joe Warrack and Claire Skinner play mother and daughter, Ben Wilson comes in. Tom Courtenay, Fanny Seward, SW1 0JF 0171-369 1721. Mon-Sat, 7.30pm, mat. Sat, plus Dec 26 and Jan 4, 3pm. (S)

HYSTERIA. Henry Goodman plays Freud, with Tim Porter as Salvador Dali. In Terry Johnson's surreal, double award-winning, the funniest serious play in London. Duke of Yorks, St Martin's Lane, WC2 0JF 0171-405 5122. Mon-Sat, 7.30pm, mat. Thurs and Sat, 3pm. (S)

AN INSPECTOR CALLS. Stephen Dack's powerful production, with Nicholas Woodson as the all-knowing Inspector, and Edward and Susan Engel as the pillars of society. Garrick, Charing Cross Road, WC2 0JF 0171-404 5089. Mon-Sat, 7.30pm, Sat, 8.15pm; mat. Wed, 2.30pm, Sat, 5pm. (S)

NEW RELEASES
(PG) A toy Indian figure comes alive. Reunited and imaginative version of Lynne Reid Banks's children's story, with Hal Scardino and Linford. Director, Frank Oz. Clapham Picture, closed Sun 0171-638 3323. MGM Chelsea 0171-362 5050. Odeon Kensington 01426 914699. West End 01426-9154 674

CURRENT
• **THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT** (15) What happens when the widowed President gets a girlfriend? Not much, even with Michael Douglas and Annette Bening. Director, Rob Reiner. Empire 0171-437 1234. MGM Chelsea 0171-362 5050. Odeon Kensington 01426 914699. Screen/Baker, closed Sun 0171-362 5050. UCI Whiteleys 0171-792 3332

• **ANGELS AND INSECTS** (15) Proactive games in Victorian England. Handsome but stiff drama, with Mark Ryden, Patsy Kensit and Kristin Scott Thomas. Director, Philip Haas. Carfax Mayfair, closed Sun 0171-369 1721. MGM Chelsea 0171-362 5050. Odeon Kensington 01426 914699. Screen/Baker, closed Sun 0171-362 5050. UCI Whiteleys 0171-792 3332

• **BABE** (U) Glorious, vicious little film about a sheep-headed pig, with a cast of talking animals. Barham, St. Paul, EC2 0JF 0171-638 8881. Clapham Picture, closed Sun 0171-638 3323. Empire 0171-437 1234. MGM Chelsea 0171-362 5050. Odeon Kensington 01426 914699. Screen/Baker, closed Sun 0171-362 5050. UCI Whiteleys 0171-792 3332

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WEEKEND CHOICE

A daily guide to arts
and entertainment
compiled by Kris Anderson

ELSEWHERE

LEEDS. Opera North opens its winter season tonight with a big new production of Verdi's Luisa Miller. An operatic setting of Schiller, with innocent guests Tommy White tonight and Kenny Baker and Dave Cliff tomorrow. Plaza on the Park, 11 Knightsbridge, SW1 0JF 0171-235 5593/3272. 9.15 and 11.15pm. (S)

FAIRY DUST AND SPARKLES. Ben Stevenson's staging of The Nutcracker for English National Ballet is the perfect antidote for post-Christmas anguish. Wonderful! Ivelly, complete with flying pastry cooks and trees that grow and grow, and great fun for everyone. The London Concert Orchestra offers a Christmas Eve gala, with tenor Benvenuto Baldoni as one of the stars. Festival Hall, South Bank, SE1 0JF 0171-360 4242. Today and tomorrow, 2.30 and 7.30pm. Sun, 2.30pm. (S)

THEATRE GUIDE

Jeremy Kingston's assessment
of theatre showing in London

House full, return only
Some seats available
Seats at all prices

DEAD FUNNY. Belinda Lang, Kevin McNulty and Sam Kelly in Terry Johnson's sharply funny play about comedy and some of their fans. Swanley, Swanley, SE10 0JF 0171-636 8889. Mon-Fri, 8pm, Sat, 8.15pm, mat. Wed, 2.30pm and Sat, 5pm. (S)

THE GLASS MENAGERIE. Sam Mendes' radiant production, Joe Warrack and Claire Skinner play mother and daughter, Ben Wilson comes in. Tom Courtenay, Fanny Seward, SW1 0JF 0171-369 1721. Mon-Sat, 7.30pm, mat. Sat, plus Dec 26 and Jan 4, 3pm. (S)

HYSTERIA. Henry Goodman plays Freud, with Tim Porter as Salvador Dali. In Terry Johnson's surreal, double award-winning, the funniest serious play in London. Duke of Yorks, St Martin's Lane, WC2 0JF 0171-405 5122. Mon-Sat, 7.30pm, mat. Thurs and Sat, 3pm. (S)

AN INSPECTOR CALLS. Stephen Dack's powerful production, with Nicholas Woodson as the all-knowing Inspector, and Edward and Susan Engel as the pillars of society. Garrick, Charing Cross Road, WC2 0JF 0171-404 5089. Mon-Sat, 7.30pm, Sat, 8.15pm; mat. Wed, 2.30pm, Sat, 5pm. (S)

THE SHAKESPEARE REVUE. A play evening of song, dance and sketches to do with William S.

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LONDON GALLERIES

British Museum: Westminster Kings and the Medieval Palace of Westminster (0171-638 8881). Hagnag: Art and Architecture, Money Street (01274 782000). Opens tonight, 7.30pm, Sat, 2.30 and 7.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm. (S)

BRADFORD. Hiss and boo to your heart's content with Mappow Kelly and Linda Luard in Black Whitehead. Atlanta, Money Street (01274 782000). Opens tonight, 7.30pm, Sat, 2.30 and 7.30pm; Sun, 2.30pm. (S)

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POP 1

From Blur to the repackaged Beatles: 1995 was an annus mirabilis for British bands



POP 2

Emmylou Harris digs deep into her emotions, but eschews her country roots, in *Wrecking Ball*



POP 3

... while on *Father & Son* two generations of Leverts join in a medley of smooth soul ballads



POP 4

... and there is one last surprise in '95: the bewigged Mike Flowers may top the chart

Master of the manic

Pulp
Brixton Academy

ROUNDING off a year in which Jarvis Cocker has become a household name, Pulp were in ebullient form at the first of two shows at Brixton Academy, writes David Sinclair. "It's nearly Christmas time and this is our Christmas present to you," Cocker proclaimed in one of the many deadpan little monologues which he reeled off by way of introduction to the songs.

Unlike so many of their Britpop peers, Pulp made a supreme effort to entertain their audience. They opened with *Do You Remember The First Time?*, an energetic burst of dancefloor pop that was accompanied by a migraine-inducing barrage of flashing pink lights. If the back of the stage, which was decorated by panels of circular lights, looked a bit like a giant op-art pinball machine, then Cocker was the ball in play. A spindly bundle of nervous energy, he darted about with his pencil-thin legs and wrists twitching compulsively under a not-quite-matching pair of trousers and jacket.

Climbing a bank of steps during *Pencil Skirt*, he made the first of many forays on to a balcony section of the stage populated by life-sized cardboard cut-outs of the group. Later, when it was time to introduce the members of the band, he introduced the cut-outs instead, pausing to conduct an interview with himself ("So, you come from a proper northern working-class background then, do you?").

Mysterious, camp, funny, sarcastic and strangely sexy, Cocker was effortlessly dominant while the other five members of the group stared at their fingers throughout — an ironic lack of stage presence considering they all contribute equally to the songwriting process, unlike Blur and Oasis which are both run as one-man songwriting dictatorships.

A brilliantly-paced set built to a climax with *Babies*, *Disco 2000* and *Mis-Shapes*, after which they disappeared with a cheerful "Goodnight, God bless" from Cocker. This was a bit of a cheat, seeing as they hadn't played *Common People*, but they reappeared after a lengthy wait for the inevitable encore.

David Sinclair on a year of resurgent British pop, now ending with the cheese course



Blur at the 1995 Brit Awards — "Britpop as an idea is not valid," Damon Albarn says. "It's to do with growing up. My ability to write chirpy tunes is fading"

What's the story? Glory

It will be remembered as the year that produced a good, old-fashioned battle of the bands. Yes, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones both released "new" albums within seven days of each other. Actually, this curious irony escaped the attention of most commentators, and in any case the Beatles bandwagon was moving with such momentum that nothing short of a Robson & Jerome record could hope to compete. The Stones did, however, lay claim to the entire top ten concert grosses in the world during 1995, according to figures published in *Music Monitor*, for various gigs on their historic Voodoo Lounge tour (No 11 was R.E.M. at Milton Keynes).

It was an odd fact that these antique groups were able to flourish in a year that will go down as a commercial and creative watershed in British pop, a period that has produced the most vibrant and successful crop of new British acts since, well, the 1960s.

Blur won the "real" battle of the bands when their single *Country House* beat the Oasis song *Roll With It* to the No 1 slot in August. But Oasis won the war. With a tally of 1.4 million copies sold, their second LP, *(What's The Story) Morning Glory?*, was, until this week, the biggest selling album of the year, although Robson & Jerome will have snatched them, as well as the Beatles, before the tills stop ringing on New Year's Eve.

This success was significant because for many years British bands, like our sportsmen, seemed to have lost the will to compete at the highest level. Bono was more keenly aware of this than most, being the singer in the last internationally recognised supergroup to emerge from the British Isles. "What was wrong in the 1980s is that you were hung for such ambitions," he told *The Guardian's* Robin Denselow. "The whole indie movement kneecapped rock'n'roll. I just hope Blur and Oasis go all the way, take on the world and win."

With their triumphant shows at Mile End Stadium and Earls Court respectively, Blur and Oasis looked set to do just that. Pulp scored a resounding succession of hits, including *Common People*, one of the key anthems of the 1990s, while Supersound and Black Grape both notched up No 1 successes with exuberant debut albums that made the business of creating great music sound as easy and natural as falling out of bed.

But as the year drew to a close, with British record sales at an all-time high, the first rumblings of the inevitable Britpop backlash were already under way. "There's a downside to your

Mum and Dad recognising Jarvis [Cocker, of Pulp]. Where's the edge?" thundered the fortysomething editor of *Vox* magazine. Blur's Damon Albarn was reluctantly forced to agree. "Britpop as an idea is no longer valid," he told *The Big Issue*. "It's to do with growing up. My ability to write chirpy tunes is fading."

This was rather like seeing Kurt Cobain a couple of years ago in his "Grunge is Dead" T-shirt: confirmation of the inevitable from the man at the top.

For a reminder of how musical movements come and go, you only had to check the fortunes in Britain this year of those American acts associated with the grunge revolution and its "new punk" aftermath. Apart from the Nirvana offshoot, Foo Fighters — who won accolades for their self-titled debut album and nearly caused a riot when they played at the Reading Festival — none of them got a look in. Green Day, Live, Offspring, Smashing Pumpkins, Alice in Chains, even the Red Hot Chili Peppers were all conspicuously unable to duplicate their American chart success over here.

Garbage, featuring the Scottish singer Shirley Manson, and Alanis

Morissette won a better reception, but as far as wilful women singers went, nothing the Americans could offer came close to matching the neurotic squawk of Björk or the lupine howl of our own PJ Harvey.

The trip-hop brigade justifiably basked in the glow of their wondrous records — *Forhead's* *Dummy* won the Mercury Music Prize, while Tricky's *Maxinquape* swept the year-end lists — but, like so many studio-based dance acts, they proved unconvincing as live performers. And with no new candidates emerging to expand the genre or push it forward, that whole spooky, pop-noir trip also seems to be running out of steam.

So what now? Naturally, the nation waits with bated breath to see whether the "cheesy" version of *Wonderwall* by the Mike Flowers Pops Orchestra can dislodge Michael Jackson's *Earth Song* to become the Christmas No 1. If so, it will be poetic recompense for Noel Gallagher, who wrote the song, given that Oasis's original version was held off the top of the chart by those ubiquitous, easy-listening troupe, Robson & Jerome.

But whether or not the "cheesy" sound really does become established in 1996, or John Lennon is discovered alive and well and living in Harlesden, or Jimmy Nail joins Oasis, the experience of 1995 suggests no early escape from Robson & Jerome.

The most vibrant crop of new acts since the 1960s

Well, hello, Emmylou, goodbye heart

ALBUMS: Neglected it may be, but the latest offering from country's sweetest gift is a classic nonetheless

EMMYLOU HARRIS

Wrecking Ball (Grapevine GRACD 102)
ALTHOUGH it has not turned up on any best-of-the-year lists so far, Emmylou Harris's album *Wrecking Ball* stands out as one of the most courageous and heartfelt releases of 1995.

With its sparse, spectral yet highly electric arrangements of songs ranging from Steve Earle's profoundly regretful *Goodbye to Jimi Hendrix's* bounteous *May This Be Love*, it is an album some distance removed from Harris's country roots, yet truer than ever to the raw emotion at the core of her artistry.

For her British dates last month, including a stunning performance on *Late* with Jools Holland, she was accompanied only by the album's producer, Daniel Lanois, wearing his guitar hero cap, and a hard-hitting two-man rhythm section. "Found I had a thirst that I could not quell/Looking for the water from a deeper well," she sang and, as on the album, the impression of a great singer thrown on her mettle in strange and exposed terrain was palpable.

BABY BIRD

Fatherhood (Baby Bird Recordings/Vital CD3)
MOST wannabe musicians go through a stage of recording innumerable home demos. The difference with Sheffield-based Steven Jones, a man with a background in theatre who calls himself Baby Bird, is that he gets to put them out as albums. And despite the lack of quality control — both technically and artistically — on *Fatherhood*, his third such release this year, there is enough of interest to make it more than a mere vanity project.

His influences are diffuse and difficult to peg (John Lennon? Lou Reed perhaps), and what with his voice being swathed in DIY echo and shored up by cheapo drum machine beats, much of it sounds like a phantom recording. But there is definitely something going on here if anyone can be bothered to tease it out of the melee.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Enter the Hardbag (A&M 540 457)
FOR the outsider, entering the world of dance music is like trying to unravel the secrets of a Masonic lodge. While certain dance styles have become established genres in their own right (techno, house, jungle), others remain little more than obscure buzzwords (electronic, hardfloor, digitronica) that could almost have been designed specifically to trip up the unknowledgeable or the unwary.

Hardbag falls somewhere between the two. Essentially a "harder" version of handbag (the commercial mutation of house, so-called because it appeals to girls who dance around their handbags in Mecca ballrooms and the like), hardbag has acquired a



Emmylou Harris emotes beautifully on *Wrecking Ball*

status sufficient to warrant its own page of reviews in the raver's monthly bible, *Muzik* magazine, and now a double-CD compilation.

Some of the 26 tracks have been hits, including *Don't You Want Me* by Felix, *Fee Fi Fo Fum* by Candy Girls and Son

TOP TEN ALBUMS

- 1 Robson & Jerome Robson & Jerome (RCA)
- 2 Made in Heaven Queen (Parlophone)
- 3 (What's the Story) Morning Glory? Oasis (Creation)
- 4 HiStory Michael Jackson (Epic)
- 5 Love Songs Elton John (Rocket)
- 6 Different Class Pulp (Island)
- 7 Life Simply Red (East West)
- 8 Something to Remember Madonna (Maverick)
- 9 The Memory of Trees Enya (WEA)
- 10 The Colour of My Love Celine Dion (Epic)

© ON

ities that involve a massive release of serotonin. The committed party-goer will find this a good, no-nonsense package, but for those who seek more than a few scraps of glibly chanted over buzzy synthesizer riffs, Hi-NRG bass lines and a relentlessly mechanised four-on-the-floor beat, caution is advised before purchase.

GERALD LEVERT & EDDIE LEVERT, SR

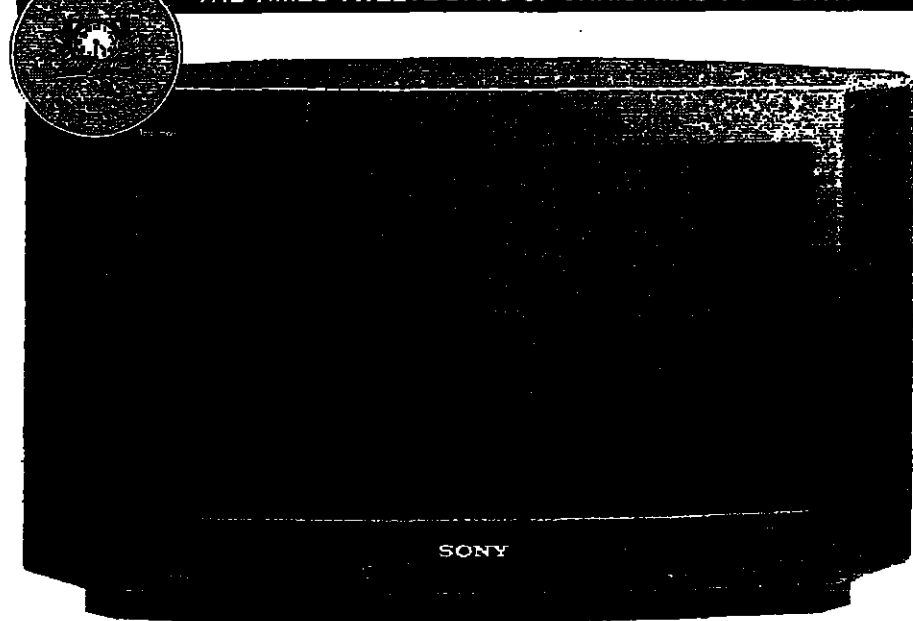
Father & Son (Eastwest America 7559-61859)
TWO soul smoothies who bridge the generation gap as seamlessly as the sky stretches to meet the sea, Eddie Levert, Sr and Gerald Levert look more like brothers than the father and son of their album title. Eddie was the guiding light of 1970s veterans, the O'Jays, while Gerald (along with his brother Sean) founded the group Levert in the 1980s and has since enjoyed significant success as a solo act.

The love between father and his son is celebrated with sentimental gusto on a variety of songs. "The apple don't fall too far from the tree/Cause I'm just like you and you're just like me," is one of the more restrained protestations, and on several numbers, such as *Wind Beneath My Wings*, the emotional cake is likely to prove a little too rich for British tastes ("I would be nothing, Daddy, nothing, zero zero, without you").

Delivered for the most part without any modern rap or swingbeat trappings, the album is a bit overlaid with slow, simmering ballads. But for connoisseurs of fine soul singing it does provide heartwarming evidence of the thread of continuity running through this venerable tradition.

DAVID SINCLAIR

THE TIMES TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS COMPETITION



Two Sony widescreen televisions to be won

Today *The Times*, continuing our *Twelve Days of Christmas* competition, brings you the chance to win a Sony widescreen television worth £1,000.

In the traditional carol, on the second day of Christmas, your true love would have sent you two turtle doves, but your favourite newspaper thinks today's readers would prefer the luxury of a fabulous television and there are two to be won.

The Sony Super Trinitron KV-28WS1 is the television format of the future, offering superior viewing. The 16:9 widescreen also represents the natural field of vision for the human eye and is therefore more enjoyable and relaxing to watch.

With its vertically flat super Trinitron tube, picture quality is excellent and the smart zoom mode fills the 16:9 screen with a conventional (4:3) picture without any noticeable distortion.

It has a fastest with eight-page memory and one button tuning capability so it is easy to operate while still maintaining technical superiority.

HOW TO ENTER

Simply identify the following lines from a popular Christmas carol.

In heav'n the bells are ringing

... Is riv'n with angel singing

Pray you, dutifully prime

your Matin chime, ye ringers

Call our competition hotline below with your answer. The line is open until midnight tonight. The first correct entries chosen at random will win. Normal Times Newspapers competition rules apply.

CALL OUR HOTLINE ON 0891 66 55 34

Calls are charged at 30p per minute, plus 40p at all other times

Rackets embracing a bright future while maintaining fine traditions

Courting success before privileged few



FREUD
ON FRIDAY

My programme stated that "In 1907 the Tennis and Rackets Association was formed to preserve, administer and develop the games". It reminded me of two Chelsea pensioners sitting in the afternoon sun on a bench in the Royal Hospital Road. One said: "Do you remember those pills they gave us during the Boer War to take our minds off women? I think mine are beginning to work."

Tennis is real tennis; rackets is a faster, older form of squash played on a larger court with a harder ball and a smaller racquet enabling the achievement of speeds of 180mph... and the 1907 aims are beginning to come good: old courts are being brought back into use; new courts are planned.

In the light of this, I took myself to the Queen's Club in west London and watched the public schools singles rackets championships. Witnessing the game has about it a certain exclusivity, for the gallery holds only 30 people. With the marker who calls "play" or "fault" after every shot, a referee who can over-rule him, the school rackets pros of the competing players, their mothers and their fathers and their younger brothers and the Brigadiers (rackets clubs have Brigadiers and Queen's has one of the very best), there is not much room for the peripatetic hack. They made room.

Don Cherry, of Tonbridge, played Alex Titchener-Barrett, of Harrow, in the final of the Inledon-Webber Cup, which is for under-16s. Cherry is a prototype rugby stand-off half: tough, solid, dependable — a hitter. Titchener-Barrett is a slighter, winning matters more to him than to his opponent; you would expect him to play chess. He is a mover.

The Harrovian, playing with grace and panache, took the first two games by 15 points to ten. He is a left-hander, executes the half-volley with rare power and precision and psyches his opponent — slows down the game by retrieving the ball at a modest walk, measures and



Cherry shows the aggressive style that earned him the public schools under-16 rackets title. Photograph: Hugh Roudledge

re-measures his serving position, asks the marker to repeat the score that he has just announced... and, when he wins a point, he grows in stature, serves with added skill to find corners from which the ball soots unplayably. It is the prerogative of the receiver to ask for a new ball; Cherry let things be; it was Titchener-Barrett who did all the asking.

The Tonbridge boy is strong, admirably fit, has the better temperament. He took the third and fourth games each by 15-5 and, after an electric opening five minutes and the score 4-4, it was he who powered home, Titchener-Barrett whose body language signalled defeat, who looked beaten before he lost, who made unforced errors.

The spectators were knowledgeable, partisan and sporting. They cheered good play, just cheered good play by their man more loudly. A number of trendy, upper-

middle class utterances filled the air: "This time" is a good thing to call, "Keep serving" is shorthand for keep serving like that, when your man has just won a point. The middle-aged citizen beside me kept repeating, "Come on, Harry" and, as neither player was called Harry, I expect that he

meant Harrow. It is no easy thing to get in an audible shout when the marker calls "Play, play, play, play..."

Rackets is played at 16 English public schools and the Foster Cup is the most prestigious trophy of them all. To determine the 16 contestants, the rackets pros go into con-

clave, argue and cite form; eventually, a puff of white smoke emerges from the committee room chimney to denote agreement.

Roger Crosby, the pro at Harrow, is their chairman and has the casting vote... insufficient to deter four Etonians from making their

way into the semi-final and causing men wearing OE ties to claim victory long before they knew the identity of the winner.

Crosby is the doyen of rackets pros: his grandfather taught the game at Portsmouth in 1894, went on to become the professional at Marlborough College. Crosby succeeded his father at Harrow, his son holds that office at Charterhouse. Uncle Jim was the man at Winchester.

After a short break for lunch, the Etonians stepped out to do battle for a place in the final: Wigan v Bailey followed by Smith-Bingham v Palmer-Tomkinson to ensure that it would not be an all-hyphen final. For those, like me, who had not seen rackets played by over-16s, it is even faster, more skilled and with fewer tantrums, only this time none of the gallery was able to shout, "Come on, Eton". Eton had come on. *Floreat Etona* is what they call it, I think.

Bailey ends Eton's long wait

NEAL BAILEY, the favourite, won the Foster Cup, the senior event of the public schools rackets championship, after a thrilling all-Etonian final against Guy Smith-Bingham yesterday (Sally Jones writes). Bailey's 3-1 victory gave the school its first elite singles crown for 25 years.

Eton set a record by providing all four semi-finalists — Bailey, Smith-Bingham and Patrick Wigan, who were seeded, and Dominic Palmer-Tomkinson, who had put out Angus Falconer, the No 2 seed.

In the final, Bailey started strongly, his greater weight of shot putting Smith-

Bingham, who has another year in the event, under constant pressure. Smith-Bingham fought back to level at one game all, controlling the ball well and retrieving effectively, but his success inspired Bailey to move up a gear and he dropped only seven more points, hitting some exquisite winners down the wall. His victory delighted Norwood Cripps, Eton's veteran professional, and brought a standing ovation from the enthusiastic gallery.

□ Dominic Palmer-Tomkinson is the nephew of Paul Palmer-Tomkinson and not as reported yesterday.

Diamonds put high value on recruiting drive

NON-LEAGUE FOOTBALL BY WALTER GAMMIE

THE Vauxhall Conference has opted to give its clubs a free Saturday before the Christmas programme, but there is no rest for the teams in its feeder leagues. Interest in the race for Conference places has been rather muted, however, by the early stranglehold that Rushden and Diamonds, in the Beazer Homes League, Enfield, in the Icis League, and Bamber Bridge, in the Unibond League, had taken on their respective competitions.

Rushden, the Northamptonshire club that is bankrolled by Max Griggs, of Dr Martens, underlined their determination to win a Conference place by putting in a £100,000 bid for Carl Alford and Steve Stott, of Kettering Town, their Conference neighbours.

Alford, whose 16 goals make him the leading scorer in the Conference, chose to stay put, but Stott, the England semi-professional international, who had joined Kettering from Bromsgrove only in the close season for £12,000, agreed to make the move to Nene Park for £30,000. Rushden have also had fruitless talks with Chris Brindley, the Kidderminster Harriers defender.

David Joyce, the secretary, said: "Things are obviously going very well at the moment and we made the moves with half an eye to the Conference. We also know that it's possible that everything could go wrong in the second half of the season."

For Kettering, Alford's decision was welcome as they are struggling to overcome a glut of injuries. Gary Johnson, the manager, has signed Micky Gynn, the former Coventry City player, to help to replace Stott, Richard Brown, who returns to Rockingham Road after leaving for Blackburn Rovers five years ago, Pat Reymont, from Corby, Robert Hayworth, a centre forward with experience at Millwall and Fulham, and Marcus Kostka, a goalkeeper.

Tomorrow, Rushden are at home to Ilkeston Town, who are struggling to make an impact after their elevation to the premier division this season and must overturn formidable form that has brought Rushden eight consecutive home wins in the league and a harvest of 31 goals. After travelling to Baldock Town on Boxing Day, Rushden have the toughest test of their programme, away at Halesowen Town, who are in fifth place with matches in hand. Enfield have begun to come

under pressure, most recently from a charge by Yeovil Town, relegated from the Conference last season and slow starters this season. Seven consecutive league victories under Graham Roberts, the former Enfield manager, gave Yeovil every incentive when the sides met at Southbury Road on Saturday.

John Ridout, a midfield player, scored his first goal in three years at the club to give Enfield the initial advantage, until injury time, when Yeovil equalised, only for the leaders to come back again and snatch victory with an own goal.

Alan Diment, the Enfield secretary, said: "We've got them away as the last game of the season. Somebody at the league has got a perverse sense of humour; they're always trying to pick the champ-

LEADERS

BEAZER HOMES LEAGUE									
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts		
Rushden	21	16	4	1	57	20	52		
Chesham	21	13	5	3	45	30	42		
Gloucester	21	12	4	5	43	25	40		
Worcester	19	11	4	4	32	18	36		
Halesowen	18	10	5	3	31	24	35		
Merthyr	21	11	2	8	41	26	35		

ICIS LEAGUE									
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts		
Enfield	20	14	3	3	41	11	45		
Dulwich	17	11	4	2	38	19	37		
Barnham W.	16	11	3	2	33	13	37		
St Albans	18	10	5	3	36	14	35		
Canterbury	17	11	4	4	34	18	34		
Yeovil	18	10	3	5	41	25	33		

UNIBOND LEAGUE									
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts		
Bamber Bridge	24	15	6	3	54	24	51		
Hyde	23	13	4	6	51	23	43		
Gusley	24	12	7	5	39	29	43		
Boston United	25	13	2	10	46	32	41		
Barnet	19	11	6	2	43	18	39		
Graysborough	22	10	7	5	32	22	37		

ionship decider." Enfield's hopes of taking up a Conference place after winning the league last season were scuppered by failing to meet its financial criteria and then losing subsequent appeals. "We've had the ground inspected by the Conference and there's no problem there," Diment said. "As for the financial issue, we hope we've got it right."

Bamber Bridge's position at the head of the Unibond League was made less secure after a 4-0 defeat last Saturday at Guiseley, for whom Steve Taylor, recently signed from Thackley, of the Northern Counties East League, scored a hat-trick.

Barrow, in fifth place with five games in hand and 12 points behind, and the side with most to gain, have managed only to draw their past two matches, away to Accrington Stanley and Frickley Athletic. They are, however, on a run of 12 matches without defeat.

SPORTS LETTERS

'Rub of the green' requires modern definition

From Mr P. J. A. Smith

Sir, The rules of golf are complex, and most players would agree that they should be simplified wherever possible. I have, however, come across a curious instance in which the Rules of Golf Committee at St Andrews takes a contrary view. At issue is the meaning and use of "rub of the green".

The term is defined in the Rules as follows: "A 'rub of the green' occurs when a ball in motion is accidentally deflected or stopped by any outside agency." This is confusing, since to most golfers the term means simply a bit of good or bad luck. If your ball lands in a divot mark, your opponent is likely to say "Rotten luck — I'm afraid it's just a rub of the green", yet

this misfortune is certainly not covered by the Rules definition.

Turning to the body of the Rules, one finds only a single reference to "rub of the green", in Rule 19-1. However, an examination of the Rule shows that the reference adds nothing to the meaning.

Some time ago, I submitted these points to the Rules Committee. The reply I received was as follows:

"I have been asked to inform you that it was agreed that although the words 'rub of the green' do not add anything to the Rules it would be a pity to delete something which has been in the Rule book since 1812."

A respect for tradition and antiquity are very well, but the game has changed in nearly every aspect since 1812. The rules are pre-eminently a department of the game which should be kept up to date and simplified wherever possible, and it seems perverse to keep this dead wood simply because it has been dead a long time.

I raise the matter now because a new edition of the Rules is due to come into force on 1st January, 1996. I hope it is not too late to persuade the R & A and USGA that "rub of the green" should be banished from the Rules. The rest of us would then be free to use the term in the sense in which it is understood by most of the English-speaking world.

Yours faithfully,
P. J. A. SMITH,
5 Victoria Street,
New Romney, Kent.

Punters enjoy wider choice

From Mr J. Ledger

Sir, In his racing commentary (December 18), Jack Waterman argues the case for restoring the Epsom Derby to its former glory. He seeks to lay the blame at the door of everything from the race-course executive, for moving the race to a Saturday, to television for the expedient of changing starting times.

Somewhat optimistically, he even believes the Government might institute a change to the Spring Bank Holiday to accommodate the event. However, the Derby's decline in popularity has little to do with any of these.

The fact is that people today have more choice of what to do with their time and money than ever before — and that includes watching "out-of-season" soccer and television soap operas.

Entertainment and value for money have become paramount and the prospect of difficult access, parking and limited viewing set against exorbitant entrance charges hold little appeal.

Football has suffered a similar fate. Since the War, average weekly attendances have halved but not because the sport is any less popular than it used to be. Today's television coverage of all sport is so extensive and professional that millions can now view at leisure and, in the case of racing, even bet easily from home, so it is hardly any wonder that outside crowds are no longer the case.

Yours etc,
J. D. LEDGAR,
Roebuck Cottage,
St Marks Road,
Binfield,
Berkshire.

Sports Letters may be sent by fax to 0171-782 5211. They must include a daytime telephone number.

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

By ROBERT SHEEHAN
BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

In an article a few weeks ago, I mentioned an auction in which I said my pass was "forcing". This refresher explains the idea. If a player makes a "forcing" pass, his partner must not pass out the opponents' existing bid — he must double or bid on. This was the auction (North-South vulnerable):

	W	N	E	S
Pass	1D	3H	3S	5H
Pass				

I was North. My pass was "forcing" because East-West were obviously sacrificing that is, they were bidding Five Hearts not as a contract but as they expected to make, but as a contract that, if doubled, would cost less than the value of North-South's contract.

The reason why both North and South knew that East-West were sacrificing was as follows: East's Three Heart overcall was pre-emptive and West, as a passed hand, clearly could not have enough to issue a slam invitation — the only other interpretation of his Five Heart bid.

North-South were clearly either going to double Five Hearts or bid on — there was no way that the contract would be passed out in Five Hearts. Hence, North's pass of Five Hearts was forcing.

A forcing pass occurs in any

auction in which it is not logical for a partnership to pass out the opposition's bid.

	W	N	E	S
1D	Pass	2H	2S	Pass
Pass	3S	Pass	Pass	Pass

East's Two Hearts bid was forcing to game. All his pass of Three Spades indicates is that he has nothing obvious to bid now. That is a point to remember — a forcing pass transfers responsibility to your partner and denies the ability to make an obvious bid. In the above sequence, if East had forced on a hand with very good hearts but otherwise minimum, he should bid Four Hearts over Three Spades. If he has good diamond support, he should show it now; and, as his pass would be forcing, a double would be very much a penalty double.

West's pass is forcing on East. West has opened with a strong bid, forcing at least to 2NT. His pass of Two Spades simply announces that he has nothing to bid now and asks his partner for further information.

□ Robert Sheehan writes on bridge Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

KEENE on CHESS

By RAYMOND KEENE
CHESS CORRESPONDENT

Kamsky's attack

Gata Kamsky, of the United States, one of the two finalists in the Fide world championship, now set for Montreal next June with a £1.16 million prize-fund, played a sparkling attacking game in the second round of the Groningen international. Kamsky's opponent, Jeroen Piket, the Dutch grandmaster, tried the risky Schliemann Defence to the Ruy Lopez. In this, Black sacrifices pawn structure and often material in order to seize the initiative, but in this case it was Kamsky who moved over to the offensive first, finishing the game with a spectacular king hunt.

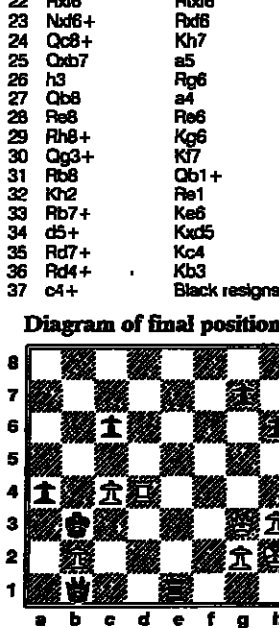
White: Gata Kamsky
Black: Jeroen Piket
Groningen, December 1995

	W	N	E	S
2C	Pass	2D	2S	Pass
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass

White: Gata Kamsky
Black: Jeroen Piket
Groningen, December 1995

20 Nxe4 Re8
21 Qg4 h6
22 Rg8 Rg6
23 Nxf6 Rxf6
24 Qc8 Kh7
25 Qxb7 a5
26 h3 Rg8
27 Qb8 a4
28 Rxf8 Rxf8
29 Rf8 Kg6
30 Qg3+ Kf7
31 Rf8 Qb1+
32 Kf2 Re1
33 Rf7+ Ke8
34 d5+ Kd5
35 Rf7+ Kd4
36 Rf4+ Kd3
37 c4+ Black resigns

Diagram of final position



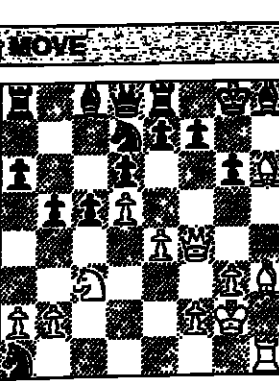
After two rounds in Groningen, Loek van Wely, of Holland, leads with 100 per cent. Michael Adams, of Great Britain, drew with Anatoly Karpov, thus leaving both players on 50 per cent.

Times chess book

Improve your game with Ray Keene's book, *The Times Winning Chess*, published by Batsford at £9.99 (credit card orders on 01576 327901).

□ Raymond Keene writes on chess Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

WINNING MOVE



By Raymond Keene

This position is from the game Warawin — Sawarinski, Russia, 1991. White has already sacrificed a rook on a1 and now invested further material to create a brilliant finish. Can you see how he drew the black king out to its doom? This is a difficult puzzle; if you can solve it, you should be considered a strong player.

Solution on page 33

By Philip Howard

MEMBRANACEOUS

- Retentive
- Wafer-thin
- Combining counterclockwise

XENODOCHUM

- Liking strangers
- A hotel
- A virulent poison

APORIA

- Insincere apologies
- A nasty disease
- Having no harbour

INEFFABLE

- Unspeakable
- Inscrutable
- Unmountable

Answers on page 33

How a charismatic Englishman became Irish football's inflexible friend

The story of Big Jack and the longest party

Jack Charlton's reign as Ireland football manager ended yesterday as it began — in confusion. During the nine years between his arrival and departure, Charlton gave Ireland unprecedented success on the international stage and Irish supporters the longest party in football history, stretching from Stuttgart in 1988 to Orlando in 1994.

His style won few plaudits from the purists, while some critics argued that, with the players at his disposal, he could have taken Ireland even further by relaxing the shackles and encouraging the players to express themselves. The lack of flexibility ultimately cost him dear.

"If plan A doesn't work, revert to plan B," Mark Lawrenson, one of Ireland's finest players in Charlton's early years, said after the 1-1 draw with Northern Ireland last spring began the decline of this past year.

Yet it is inarguable that Charlton gave direction, discipline and success to Ireland, taking the country to its first big international tournament, with the 1988 European championship finals quickly followed by the World Cups of 1990 and 1994. If he did not do it with style, he did it with a certainty that brooked no argument, making Ireland never less than hard to beat and often irresistible through sheer effort and determination. Any but the most talented — Italy in 1990, Holland in 1988 and again a week ago — or the most determined were subjugated by the sheer pressure as Ireland hounded them.

In the process, Charlton gave the country a focal point for its pride and its burgeoning sense of nationhood as a fully-fledged member of the European Community. The supporters' chant, "You'll never beat the Irish", was more than a statement on football, even if it is a fitting representation of Ireland's approach on the field. The irony that it took an Englishman to do it cannot be missed.

Until Charlton came along, Irish football supporters lived



Peter Ball looks at the man and methods that lay behind a unique era of success

their World Cups vicariously through the doings of England or Northern Ireland. In 1982 and 1986, the sense that Northern Ireland were in Spain and Mexico while Ireland, with arguably better players, stayed at home, bit deep. For years, however, Irish football had lacked organisation, the efforts of John Giles to bring order to it meeting some success but not enough. Eoin Hand, his successor, was popular, but a romantic who was too much in awe of such talents as Liam Brady. Confronted with such players, Hand was better at banging the drum than the table in the dressing-room. He and Giles also lacked luck.

Charlton had no such inhibitions about calling his top

players to order and he also fulfilled Napoleon's wish to have a lucky general. Ironically, he got the job by default. Bob Paisley was expected to win the position in a vote of the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) council, but failed by one vote to get a majority over his three challengers, leaving Charlton as the candidate to stand against him. For political reasons, Charlton picked up all the votes previously given to Giles and Liam Tuohy, and, unexpectedly, one of Paisley's supporters changed sides.

Charlton's entry by the side door, however, did not prevent him from stamping his authority from the start. The ball was to be played forward early and opponents turned. Playing from the back was anathema and playing through midfield only slightly less so. "I'm a negative man, me," Charlton once announced and he left his forwards and midfield players in no doubts about their defensive responsibilities.

He inherited a squad of perhaps greater talent than at any time subsequently. Only the attack, with Stapleton initially without a convincing partner, was thin. Brady, Whelan, and Galvin were available for midfield; McGrath, Lawrenson and O'Leary provided a trio of outstanding footballing central defenders.

Charlton, though, preferred a more basic approach from his centre halves. Lawrenson was quickly moved to midfield, followed by McGrath, and O'Leary was cast into the wilderness when he refused a late call-up for a summer tour, saying that he had already booked his holiday. O'Leary did not play again for 30 months, giving an early taste of Charlton's approach.

The methods, though, were successful, although it still needed the sort of luck that his predecessors lacked for Ireland to make the breakthrough to their first important event. If Bulgaria had avoided defeat against Scotland in Sofia, they would have won their qualifying group, but Scotland won 1-0 to send Ireland to the 1988 European finals in Germany.

For two weeks, Ireland came to a stop. Thousands of supporters, regarding this as the trip of a lifetime, followed them in party mood, determined to enjoy themselves, bringing a breath of fresh air in a game still struggling to cope with the wilder excesses of hooliganism. The team exceeded expectations. Ray Houghton, one of the "Angels" that Charlton had found in his bid to strengthen the side, scoring the goal to beat England in Stuttgart.

The team returned to Dublin in triumph. Charlton, that quintessential Englishman, became an honorary Irishman by acclamation. Other re-



Roberto Baggio congratulates Charlton after the Irish defeat of Italy in a memorable encounter in New Jersey last year

wards were more tangible. From Guinness to the Irish Tourist Board, Shredded Wheat to Monaghan Champion Milk, commercial firms queued up for his services.

The bandwagon was rolling. So was the team as Ireland qualified for their first World Cup finals, in Italy in 1990. Before they got there, Charlton gave another taste of his autocratic style when he pulled Brady off half an hour into his testimonial against Germany because the ball player was not picking up his immediate opponent.

The subsequent furore was quickly forgotten as Ireland again surpassed expectations, reaching the quarter-finals be-

fore going down with honour to Italy in Rome. Critics pointed out that they had got there without winning a match, while the game with England in Cagliari left Italians — and others — aghast at what was being perpetrated under the name of football.

Who cared? The Irish supporters enjoyed their party and revelled in the sight of Packie Bonner and O'Leary emerging as heroes during the penalty shoot-out with Romania in the second round. Charlton was given the Freedom of Dublin on his return.

By now, Ireland expected success and it continued, even though they failed to qualify for the 1992 European cham-

pionship finals. The 1994 World Cup offered ample compensation. As the finals approached, the team was beginning to age, but fresh blood arrived in Jason McAteer, Phil Babb, and Gary Kelly, and wins in Holland and Germany in warm-up matches sent them to the United States with, for the first time, the expectation weighing heavily.

Charlton did not enjoy that summer. He had been ill before the tournament and was out of sorts with himself, showing that, for all his bluntness, he did not cope well under pressure. Ireland could not have had a better start, beating Italy in New Jersey, but even that failed to comfort

Charlton. He spent the tournament complaining, with reason, about the heat, new rules on tackling and the supply of water to players during matches. He was fined and suspended for abusing a FIFA official over a substitution.

The FAI stood by him, but relationships were beginning to fray and he began to talk about resignation. A successful start to the European championship campaign suggested that he had been rejuvenated, but things began to fall apart in the summer and his complaints since suggest that his latest batch of players are less convinced about his tactics than their predecessors. A parting seemed inevitable.



Albert Reynolds, the then Irish Prime Minister, greets Charlton on his return to Dublin from the 1994 World Cup

Board rejects Collymore's claim for transfer money

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

FRANK CLARK, the Nottingham Forest manager, claimed that justice had been done after the attempt by Stan Collymore to win back more than £400,000 from his former club was rejected by the FA Premier League.

Collymore maintained that he was entitled to 5 per cent of the British record fee of £5.5 million that Liverpool paid Forest during the summer because he had not requested a transfer. The FA Premier League board said, however, that it had not been "persuaded" by Collymore's version of events and that Forest were therefore not obliged to pay.

Collymore did gain a measure of consolation, however, since Forest were instructed to pay an outstanding signing-on fee of £150,000, agreed when Collymore joined Forest from Southampton United for £2.2 million in 1993.

Clark said that the decision vindicated Forest's refusal to bow to the striker's demands. The club insisted that Collymore had engineered the transfer, even though a formal request was never put in writing. "I don't think it's a case of being happy," Clark added. "Justice has been done. There are no winners and no losers."

Collymore did not comment, but Paul Sturford, his

agent, said that the player would take advice from the Professional Footballers' Association.

Bolton Wanderers are expected to complete the £1.5 million move of Nathan Blake, the Sheffield United and Wales striker, to Burnley Park today. The Premiership's bottom club yesterday agreed a part-exchange deal in which Mark Patterson, their midfielder, will join United.

Blake, 23, who joined United from Cardiff for £300,000 in February 1994, is likely to make his debut tomorrow against Tottenham Hotspur at White Hart Lane.

Mark McGhee, the Wolver-

hampton Wanderers manager, made his first signing yesterday when he secured Vinny Samways, the Everton midfielder, on a month's loan.

The move for Samways, 27, is expected to become permanent in the new year with a fee of around £1.2 million expected.

McGhee has also looked towards Simon Osborn, who has failed to break into the Queens Park Rangers midfield since moving from Reading. Osborn, for whom McGhee paid £90,000 to Crystal Palace during his spell at Elm Park, had talks with Wolverhampton yesterday. If the deal, expected to be in excess of £1 million, is completed today, Osborn, and

Samways too, will be eligible for Wolverhampton's game tomorrow against Reading.

Brighton, the Endleigh Insurance League second division club, yesterday announced that they had submitted a planning application for a leisure and commercial development including a new 30,000-seat stadium to be ready for the beginning of the 1997-98 season.

The farmland site is at Toad's Hole Valley in Hove, about a mile from the Goldstone Ground, the club's present home, which they must vacate by June 1997. Gaining planning permission, however, is unlikely to be straightforward.



Collymore: compensation

Britain gain success from Egyptian foray

THE Great Britain men's hockey team completed a successful training week in Cairo yesterday with a 3-1 victory over Egypt as part of the build-up to the Olympic qualifying tournament in Barcelona next month (Sydney Friskin writes).

The foundation to victory was laid by Garcia with a goal from a short corner after 13 minutes, but the Egyptians redressed the balance six minutes later when Tawfik, the full back, converted a penalty stroke. Robert Thompson restored Britain's lead with a goal from open play in the 21st

minute and added another midway in the second half to seal victory. Britain used only two substitutes, Shaw and Giles.

Further preparation includes two matches next month against Italy at Cagliari, Sardinia, and two against Malaysia at Bisham Abbey. The eight teams competing in Barcelona from January 19 are Spain, Holland, India, Great Britain, Canada, Belgium, Malaysia and Belarusia. The top five teams from this round-robin event will qualify for the Olympic Games in Atlanta.

English pack chasing Nicol in title hunt

By COLIN MCQUILLAN

THE QM national squash championship, which had been expected to settle the emergent hierarchy of English men's squash, took on a sudden Celtic flavour when the draw was made yesterday at Edgbaston Priory in Birmingham, where the championship is scheduled next year from January 9 to 15.

Peter Nicol, the young Scottish champion, was drawn as top seed and Adrian Davies, the semi-retired but vastly experienced Welsh captain, appeared in the quarter from which Stephen Meads hopes to become the first man to successfully defend the British

title. Nicol was beaten in the 1993 final by Peter Marshall, the double hander from Nottingham at present out of the game suffering chronic fatigue syndrome, and has returned to high form with a career-best win in the lucrative Mahindra Challenge in Bombay.

He is scheduled for a semi-final against Simon Parke, the Yorkshireman who led England's line in their world team victory last month. The bottom half of the men's draw offers a scheduled semi-final between Del Harris, the Essex player whose thrust into the World Open final last month took him back to the top of England's rankings for the first time in nearly five years,

and Mark Chaloner, of Lincoln, who this week took the international newcomer award from the Sports Writers' Association for his decisive role in the England team victory.

Jonah Barrington, the former world No. 1, who is now president of the Squash Rackets Association, made the draw yesterday and expressed a peculiarly English satisfaction at Nicol's top seeding.

"It means the Scotsman has to take the pressure with all the Englishmen aiming at him," Barrington said. The early action in the QM women's national championship at Edgbaston Priory is likely to be in the top half of

the draw, where Fiona Geaves, the defending champion, of Gloucester, is again scheduled to meet Jane Martin, the No 5 seed, and Cassandra Jackman, the top seed.

Suzanne Horner, from Yorkshire, the No 2 seed, who broke down with back problems in a semi-final against Linda Charman last year, looks to have a clear run to the same stage this year for a scheduled meeting with Sue Wright, of Kent.

SEEDINGS: Men: 1, P Nicol (Scotland); 2, D Harris (Essex); 3, S Parke (Yorkshire); 4, M Chaloner (Lincoln); 5, M Cairns (Oxfordshire); 6, P Johnson (Kent); 7, S Meads (Berkshire); 8, D Meddings (Sussex); 9, C Jackson (Norfolk); 10, S Horner (Yorkshire); 11, T Geaves (Gloucester); 12, S Wright (Kent); 13, J Martin (Northumbria); 14, L Chapman (Sussex); 15, R Macrae (Essex); 16, D Leeson (Sussex).

Botham Jr given his chance in first team

LIAM BOTHAM, a cricketer in his father's image, will be able to claim that he is one of the former England captain when he makes first-team debut for West Hartlepool Rugby (union) Football Club in the local derby against Hartlepool Rovers on Boxing Day (Christopher Irvine writes).

Whereas Ian's second spell was football, and he had a brief career at Scunthorpe United, Liam, 19, enjoyed his rugby at school and was keen to keep playing. He was recommended to Barry Foster, West Hartlepool's director of rugby, by Bill Beaumont.

Foster has been sufficiently impressed by Botham's handful of appearances for the second XV to name him at centre for what is always a hard-fought encounter.

Tomba pulls out

Skiing: Lasse Kjus, of Norway, won the World Cup giant slalom race in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia, yesterday after Alberto Tomba, the titleholder, refused to continue because of what he described as dangerous conditions.

The first run was scrapped because of the weather after 12 skiers, including Tomba, had completed the course. The Italian, who was lying second, protested furiously when organisers announced that the first heat would be re-run, then withdrew. Michael von Grubingen, of Switzerland, who led after the re-run first heat, finished second, with Mario Reiter, of Austria, third.

Humber bound

Rugby league: Hull ended weeks of uncertainty yesterday by appointing Phil Sigsworth, the former Australia international, as their coach. Sigsworth, 36, who had been coaching Ryedale Eastwood in the Sydney metropolitan competition, will take over early in the new year.

Dublin date

Rugby union: Ken Reid, the director of the Heineken Cup competition, yesterday summoned Yves Revol, the president of Castres, to attend an inquiry into the fracas that marred his club's tie with Swansea at St Helen's earlier this month. The official investigation will be held in Dublin on January 4.

Two for Sydney

Athletics: Colin Jackson and Sonia O'Sullivan are to compete at two meetings in Australia as part of their preparations for the Olympic Games in Atlanta. Jackson, the holder of the 110 metres hurdles world record, and O'Sullivan, of Ireland, the world 5,000 metres champion, will run at the national championships in Sydney from March 7 to 10 after an event in Melbourne on February 29.

	Depth (cm)	Conditions	Runs to resort	Weather (5pm)	Last snow
AUSTRIA					
St Anton	10 120	fair heavy slush	rain	3 20/12	
	(Main at resort level turning to snow at 1,800m)				
Sell	20 55	good varied closed	cloud	2 21/12	
	(Good snow and skiing on all open runs; eight of 12 lifts open)				
FRANCE					
Alpe d'Huez	40 100	fair varied	fair cloud	2 17/12	
	(Main runs still good but more worn and hard patches)				
Tignes	15 110	good heavy	art - snow	4 21/12	
	(Granite Motta good; Tignes and Pelegrin very rocky)				
Val d'Isère	15 100	fair poor	art cloud	6 18/12	
	(Best skiing at La Daille where pistes not worn)				
SWITZERLAND					
C Montana	0 50	fair poor closed	cloud	2 18/12	
	(Limited skiing on man-made snow at Pas du Loup)				
Mürren	20 80	good heavy open	cloud	3 18/12	
	(Schilthorn and Engelai good; snow heavy lower down)				
Verbier	25 80	good varied closed	cloud	3 21/12	
	(Fresh snow on hard pistes; a few more lifts now open)				

Source: Ski Club of Great Britain. L - lower slopes; U - upper; art - artificial.

THE TIMES

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Rowell restricted by controlling interest of others



Rowell: easy target of local and divisional rivalry

My sympathies lie with Jack Rowell. Not that he is a man who gives any outward appearance of caring about misanthropes, but the past week has meant that he has had to survive a severe and disproportionate lambasting. From the moment that he was given a loud and undignified raspberry at Welford Road — for his omission from the England team of Dean Richards — which was repeated for his team at a discourteous Twickenham, he has had to suffer a few inconveniences.

This may suggest not so much that the larger louts are already at games and are impatient with any measure of failure, but that England, like Wales, is subject to geographical divisions and envy that are reinforced among their rugby clubs. Bath's serial destruction of other clubs' hopes and endeavours over the past decade or so makes Rowell, as their former mentor, an easy target of local and divisional rivalry. Men behaving badly may have been part of rugby; buffoonery, too, but this manifestation of incipient hooliganism is a new and disturbing phenomenon.

Yet there are other reasons why Rowell should engage a more charitable view. Indeed, up to a point — the point when the partnership between players and coach finally breaks down and which has occurred with three of Wales's past four coaches — every national coach in the four home unions should do so.

A coach's destiny does not lie within his control. He is, after all, manacled to the players. It is with them that his fate rests. No position in any calling that deems itself professional allows so much

control to be in other people's hands. This leaves the rugby coach in an exposed position. He rises or falls on the strengths and weaknesses of his charges; on the collective will of the team or the individual whims of a player. What- ever claims are made in his favour, it is the players who win or lose a match.

To compare the coach's role to that of an executive of a commercial company may be apposite, and parallels can be drawn in terms of management, organisation, the setting of objectives and so on.

The difference, however,



GERALD DAVIES
Rugby Commentary

lies in an important area. When the enterprise is going well and the targets are accomplished, the company executive, as an integral part of the team, is there to share in the action and the rewards. Equally, when things go awry, he or she is there to intervene and so to influence in a hands-on capacity any change in plan. He or she is not remote.

The coach, however, is absent when the action is at its height. When it matters most, isolated and frustrated in his bunker, he cannot do a thing about it. Thus, accountability

for the performance, good or bad, rests firmly with the players. No doubt, all the preparation in training had gone according to plan. Rowell had doubtless shown the way and had provided the players with their many options. His task was done. It was the execution of all that was talked about and practised that went wrong.

In another respect, too, the national rugby coach is at the mercy of others. He is dependent on the quality of the coaching at club level. It is here that technique and attitudes are nurtured and ingrained. Rowell, for instance, talks about something called "total rugby", but, unless club coaches understand what this means and how it is to be achieved, then Rowell is hardly likely to change matters on the few occasions that he meets his players. Under the

pressure of international matches, players will either resort to the type of game that they best understand or else flounder artlessly with practices to which they are unaccustomed.

England have had seven years of success, but, since they attempted to expand their game against Scotland at Murrayfield in 1990, and failed, they retreated to a pattern that they knew best. The squeezing power of the forwards more or less guaranteed success; but it also made them inflexible.

This has created a tactical culture that has filtered through to clubs. This is fine as far as it goes, but, if the national team is to broaden its horizons, it must do so in tandem with the clubs. For the moment, after the hesitant victory against Western Samoa, it is back to basics.

Gillespie asked to explain his late decision

By DICK HINDER

THE late abandonment of the Cheltenham race meeting earlier this month is to be investigated by the Jockey Club's disciplinary committee. Having studied reports prepared after racing was called off on December 9, the Jockey Club stewards have decided that the committee should hold an inquiry to determine whether Edward Gillespie, the acting clerk of the course, complied with the rules of racing.

It has yet to be clarified which rules are in question, just that there is a case to answer.

John Maxse, a Jockey Club spokesman, said: "There are a number of instructions issued to clerks which they are asked to follow and a clerk should at all times act in a professional manner."

The most obvious similar case was at Newcastle two years ago, on Fighting Fifth Hurdle day, when racing was abandoned and the clerk of the course, David Parnley, was fined £600.

The late decision to abandon the Cheltenham meeting, which featured the Triple Crown, caused controversy as no warnings of the fixture were in jeopardy because of frost had been issued. Some 8,000 racegoers had been admitted to the Prestbury Park course when the abandonment was announced at 12.55 — 35 minutes after the time scheduled for the delayed first race. No date has been set for the inquiry.

With the weather threatening to play havoc with the Boxing Day fixtures, clerks of courses will be under pressure over the holiday period, but there was no controversy over the cancellation of Uttoxeter yesterday, because of frost. Lingfield, the remaining fixture, went ahead, although the going was bottomless.

One horse that revelled in the testing ground was the David Nicholson-trained St Mellion Fairway, who made an impressive debut over

fences by comfortably accounting for Betty's Boy, a previous winner.

The strapping six-year-old, formerly with Jim Old, looked an above-average recruit as he galloped clear by nine lengths in the Lowndes Lambert Novices' Chase.

"He came to me at the beginning of September," Nicholson said. "He's a nice young horse, but we shan't go mad with him."

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Gallian's failure changes scenario



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Christmas isn't Christmas until Christmas

For a channel controller, Christmas shopping is a haphazard and neurotic affair. In the months preceding the big festival, his scribbled list of something nice for Christmas Eve. Something funny. Something with Patricia Routledge. In grows so grubby in his hand that it virtually disintegrates. In mid-October he wakes up in the night, yells "Not! Not! I forgot 2 Point 4 Children!" And so, just like the rest of us, he keeps acquiring things for Christmas in a vague and worried way, because he still hasn't found perfection.

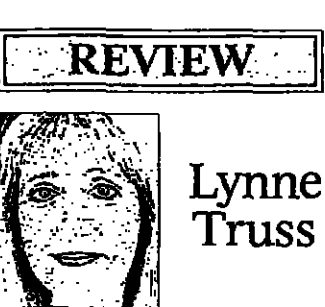
The outcome is inevitable. When the day finally arrives for allocating his booty, he is agitated at the mountains of mediocre stuff he has bought. He sits on the floor with his fingers in his mouth. He finds to his horror that he must schedule his Christmas special of *The Detectives* on Thursday December 21, four days early, because other-

wise it won't go out at all. That's my explanation, anyway. Every year the two weeks around Christmas creak heavily with hopeful "specials" which don't make the grade, and the sight is poignant, like seeing fat puppies tethered outside Battersea Dogs Home. *The Detectives* last night (BBC1) was a perfect example of an aspirational script written for Christmas Eve, or even Christmas Day, yet ruthlessly shunted into a less significant slot. Bob and Dave (Robert Powell and Jasper Carrott) enjoyed some routine yuletide calamities — their scrawny, one-legged turkey was run over by a car — and the plot turned on seasonal goodwill. With a few egg noggs inside you, it might have been OK. But shown on the Thursday before Christmas, its "so what?" factor was unfairly high.

Did *The Detectives* deserve dogs-home treatment? Well, there were some passably funny scenes.

The boys used blue-and-white police tape to wrap their presents; they made a sad excursion to an off-lit fence where "buy three lagers, get one free" prompted them to keep augmenting their order, until finally they bought 78. "With the money we've saved," they reasoned, "we can buy six more!" On the minus side, however, you may call me an incorrigible old moralist but the idea of two comical policemen forging a handbag-snatcher because he is *Dave's brother* and because it is *Christmas* never seemed quite satisfactory, even for Christmas Day. You wouldn't catch Charles Dickens endorsing it, anyway.

The last of the current run of *Secret Lives* on Channel 4 dealt with Ché Guevara — the man behind the myth, as the cliché goes. Ché appeared in fabulous old Cuban propaganda footage, helping with the sugar-



canne harvest and striking handsome attitudes under a beret. His "secret life" (ie, the dirt) mainly concerned his ruthlessness as a revolutionary, his willingness to execute the opposition. "This was not a dilemma of conscience for him," said his old chums. But who among us believed revolutionaries to be big softies, anyway? On behalf of the revolution, I

demand, are you an oppressor of the people? "Er, yes I am. But you're not going to shoot me next to a big pit, are you?"

"Good grief, of course not. I just wanted to clear a few things up. Have these three lagers. And, yes, it's your lucky day. Have another one free."

Secret Lives told Ché's story clearly and absorbingly, and failed only to mention the eerie parallel between Ché and Buach Cassidy — getting senselessly killed in Bolivia, having gone there for the easy pickings. What made Ché a legend? Well, as was hinted at by several people at the end of Alex Anderson's film, it did no harm to his posthumous reputation that the image of his half-naked dead body on a table is one of the great modern types of Christ. Once seen, it is never forgotten. The beard and long hair, the pale face, the trace of bruising on his arms,

Ché was brilliant at image-making. Even death didn't stop him.

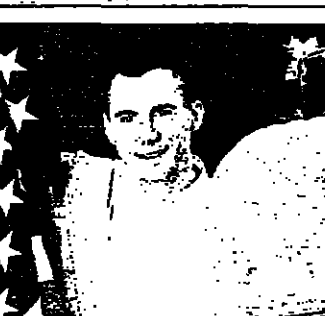
Oddly, the one event never anticipated in *Roughnecks* (BBC1) was that one day the riggers would strike oil. But last night, in the final episode of the series, a cry went up: "They've broken through" which I think secures the future of the rig, which is nice. Yee ha, if you will pardon the expression.

Roughnecks has been smoothly derided in some quarters but I don't see why. The team drama has rarely worked so well. The acting and writing are good, and the characters are now so firmly established that on each scene-cut comes a pleasant surprise. "Cinders! I'd forgotten about Cinders!" Like most clever popular dramas (such as *Soldier, Soldier*) it pretends to be about something other than adult sexual relationships but isn't really. Last night's key scenes

took place in Norway, where Chris (Liam Cunningham) danced intensely under fairy lights with Tessa (Teresa Barnham), while watched by a suffering Tom (James Cosmo). These three are all hard-hat colleagues in a Hazzchem environment, yet the message is clear: when it comes to love they are as helpless as kittens.

The charisma of Chris has always been a mystery to me. He has a bony, determined face and an unvarying expression, and his young wife Heather is doubtless better off without him. At the end of the episode, he hitched a ride with a long-distance lorry driver. What was going on? Together with the sinister music, this suggested a permanent exit. With any other series, the disappearance of Chris would tell us "he won't return, he's going back to the theatre" but *Roughnecks* feels so relaxed and organic, that perhaps it signifies nothing of the sort.

REVIEW



Gary Rhodes adds a seasonal twist (BBC2, 8.30pm)

Rhodes Around Christmas BBC2, 8.30pm

Della has her common sense, Floyd has his insouciance, Rhodes has his hair. Television cooks all have their trademarks that elevate them from mere purveyors of recipes into personalities. Gary Rhodes's spiky quiff, gelled to perfection, makes him the punk of the pundits. He likes to take the traditional and give it a twist. In this special, he travels to New York and London for inspiration for his Christmas menu. He starts with smoked ool, followed by saltimbocca with the usual veal and parma ham replaced by turkey and bacon, rounded off with mince meat doughnuts and rum sauce. For veggie, there is a particularly wonderful mushroom pancake *millefeuille*. "You get loads of taste, texture and flavour" ... and the food's not bad either.

CHOICE

Coogan's Run: The Curator BBC2, 9.30pm

Tim Fleck is the proud curator of Little Orle's museum where the prime exhibits include a Victorian milkmaid stool "with a difference" and a pair of pistols Dick Turpin probably did not use. The last comic character created by Steve Coogan is a boring, ginger-haired no-hoper, with a dying mother and a passion for a museum nobody wants to visit. Fleck's world is given a sickening lurch when the council withdraws its funding and the museum is turned into a steakhouse. Perilously near to peeing as all good comedy should be, the silly upbeat ending offers the appropriate antidote. Patrick Marber is the writer and director, the detail is brilliant and the cast, including Alison Steadman and Coogan character cameos, faultless.

Farm Fantasia

Channel 4, 8.00pm

Every year animal behaviourist Marthe Kiley-Worthington and her partner Chris Rendle put on a concert for their local community, which features the animals of their 80-acre farm on the edge of Dartmoor. This year her ambition is to put on a ballet featuring both human dancers and, probably, pigs that, by she believes that animals and human beings can coexist in a symbiotic relationship and that the project will build bridges between art and science and respect between the species. Selected animals are trained to sit, beg and roll over in time to the music. Part of Channel 4's *Beauty* Christmas season, the film charts the pair's race against time to put the dream into reality.

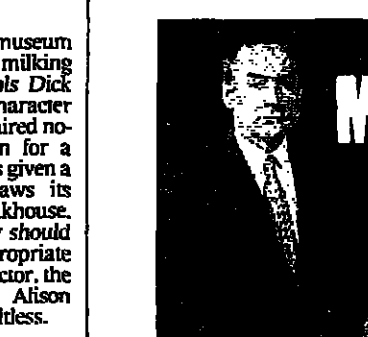
Missing at Christmas

ITV, 9.00pm

The agony of waiting for news of missing relatives is especially keen at Christmas, which is a timely reason for this live special. Appeals for missing teenagers Curtis Harlow and Jayne Taylor to get in touch with their relatives and the story of two wives waiting for news of their husbands are two of the emotional features. Fiona Foster and Alastair Stewart join celebrities such as Cilla, Esther, Bill Treacher (Arthur of *EastEnders*) and Gaby Logan to preach, on behalf of the families, for the missing to get in touch with their loved ones. Also included is the story of 15-year-old Mimi Cooke who tells of her life as a runaway, as well as that of a family successfully reunited by an earlier programme.

CARLTON/LWT

6.00am GMTV (8312716) 9.25 *The New Adventures of He-Man* (R) (8404944) 9.50 *Batman — The Animated Series* (s) (1917342) 10.20 *ITN News* headlines (Teletext) (5415367) 10.30 *Murder, She Wrote. Unfinished Business* With Angela Lansbury (4256939) 11.25 *It's Xmas, It's Number One* (r) (s) (4567464) 12.20pm *London Today* (Teletext) (8350629) 12.30 *ITN Lunchtime News* (Teletext) (2118667) 12.55 *Home and Away* (Teletext) (2193358) 1.25 *Coronation Street* (r) (Teletext) (44282193) 1.55 *Shortland Street* (96910754) 2.20 *The Chrystal Rose Show* (s) (18868735) 2.50 *High Road* (Teletext) (5339990) 3.20 *ITN News* headlines (Teletext) (8243777) 3.25 *London Today* (Teletext) (8823648) 3.30 *FILM: The Princess Bride* (1987) with Cary Elwes and Mandy Patinkin. A medieval spoof adventure. Directed by Rob Reiner (884193) 5.10 *LWT — Caring at Christmas*. (2205648) 5.40 *ITN Early Evening News* (Teletext) (2262611) 6.00 *Home and Away* (r) (Teletext) (708396) 6.25 *London Today* (Teletext) (480716) 7.00 *Family Fortunes*. (Teletext) (s) (4174) 7.30 *Coronation Street*. Curly gets a surprise Christmas present. (Teletext) (377) 8.00 *The Bill*. On the Lookout. An observation goes wrong. For Sister and Boydon. With Tony O'Callaghan and Alan Westaway (3822) 8.30 *Faith in the Future. Love of Food* (Teletext) (s) (9629)



Alastair Stewart and Fiona Foster (9.00pm)

9.00 *Missing at Christmas*. Celebrities help to reunite families (2803) 10.00 *News at Ten* (Teletext) and weather (79025) 10.30 *Crim Monthly* with Penny Smith (2822758) 11.40 *London Tonight* (Teletext) (555613) 11.50 *Flesh*. Documentary about the rise of the gay club scene in Manchester in the 1990s (812342) 12.35am *Sledge Hammer*. Sledge loses his temper when he discovers that his former wife is to marry his old friend Scott (2233743) 1.05 *FILM: Private Sessions* (1985) with Mike Farrell and Maureen Stapleton. A psychiatrist believes therapy should be available to all who need it. His patients include a New York cab driver who is hearing voices and a fellow analyst who is struggling to control her sex drive. Directed by Michael Pressman (428588) 2.45 *The Chart Show* (s) (5580033) 3.40 *FILM: Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966, b/w) with Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor. An emotionally disturbed couple live out a fantasy but the wife betrays the secret to a couple invited back to their house for a drink. With George Segal, Sandy Dennis. Based on Edward Albee's play. Elizabeth Taylor won the Oscar for Best Actress. Directed by Mike Nichols (70526033) 5.55 *ITN Morning News* (9647192). Ends at 6.00

RADIO CHOICE

TLC 9.00am *The Floral Magic of Kenneth Turner* (9550483) 9.30 *Christmas* (9550483) 10.00 *Christmas* (9550483) 10.30 *Soul Mates* (9550483) 11.00 *Only Human* (1472735) 12.00 *Volunteers* (9550483) 1.00 *Christmas* (9550483) 1.30 *The Floral Magic of Kenneth Turner* (9550483) 2.00 *Christmas* (9550483) 2.30 *Christmas* (9550483) 3.00 *Christmas* (9550483) 3.30 *Christmas* (9550483) 4.00 *Christmas* (9550483) 4.30 *Christmas* (9550483) 5.00 *Christmas* (9550483) 5.30 *Christmas* (9550483) 6.00 *Christmas* (9550483) 6.30 *Christmas* (9550483) 7.00 *Christmas* (9550483) 7.30 *Christmas* (9550483) 8.00 *Christmas* (9550483) 8.30 *Christmas* (9550483) 9.00 *Christmas* (9550483) 9.30 *Christmas* (9550483) 10.00 *Christmas* (9550483) 10.30 *Christmas* (9550483) 11.00 *Christmas* (9550483) 11.30 *Christmas* (9550483) 12.00 *Christmas* (9550483) 12.30 *Christmas* (9550483) 1.00 *Christmas* (9550483) 1.30 *Christmas* (9550483) 2.00 *Christmas* (9550483) 2.30 *Christmas* (9550483) 3.00 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Popular manager ends confusion by resigning after ten years at meeting with FAI

Charlton puts Ireland out of its misery

FROM PETER BALL IN DUBLIN

JACK CHARLTON'S career as manager of the Ireland football team, spanning almost ten years, ended yesterday. After 48 hours of confusion, Charlton flew in here at lunchtime and resigned at a meeting with Football Association of Ireland (FAI) officials. The resignation was accepted without demur.

"I have felt for some time there was a need for change," Charlton said in a statement. "Ten years is a long time in the job. They have been brilliant years. I have enjoyed every minute, the *craic* has been great but everything must come to an end.

"It was a dreadfully difficult decision to make, but I felt it was in the best interests of the Irish teams." Louis Kilcoyne, the president of the FAI, paid tribute to Charlton, saying

that the FAI and the people of Ireland owed him a huge debt for all that he had done for football and the country over the past ten years.

"Jack has steered our international team to levels of success never before achieved," an FAI statement read. "In doing this, he has helped to expand the game to

Success story 32

every corner of Ireland in a way which could hardly have been predicted.

"The success of the team under Jack has raised the morale and self-esteem of the whole nation, including the many thousands of Irish people living abroad; and the behaviour of the fans has improved the public image of

Ireland all over the world and the marketability of all things Irish, particularly in the tourist sector."

That raises the question why the FAI was so quick to let him go, for Kilcoyne did not exaggerate. Charlton took the side to the 1988 European championship finals and to the World Cup finals in 1990 and 1994, the country's first appearances at this level of competition. He also made them one of the most respected teams in Europe, with wins over Holland, Germany, Italy and England during his time in charge.

Recently, however, the wheels had begun to come off. His resignation had been widely rumoured since the team's unexpected decline since the summer.

Holland's victory at Anfield in the European championship play-off last week, which ended Ireland's hopes of qualifying for the finals next summer, made it inevitable, but the timing still came as a surprise. After the game at Anfield, Charlton said that he wanted to enjoy his Christmas and then take until the new year to consider his future. That luxury has been denied him.

Although Kilcoyne insisted that Charlton wished to retire, there seems no doubt that his hand was forced yesterday when he met the three-man FAI delegation of Kilcoyne, Sean Connolly, the chief executive, and Joe Delaney, the treasurer.

Things had begun to move out of Charlton's control at the beginning of the week, when leaks from the FAI made the meeting yesterday public knowledge with the understanding that a press conference would follow. Charlton was caught on the back foot, and never recovered his equilibrium. He initially threatened not to travel yesterday, but a long telephone call from Kilcoyne persuaded him otherwise. The outcome was inevitable.

"Jack told us that he always



Charlton, who appeared unhappy at his pub in Dublin after resigning as manager of the Ireland team. Photographs Tom Honan



Charlton after the play-off defeat by Holland at Anfield last week, which was to be his last match in charge

knew when it was time to go," Kilcoyne said. "He has had a stressful six months since the defeat by Austria and he explained to us that he had given it a lot of thought and knew he wanted to go. We had no reason but to accept it."

Charlton, though, appeared unhappy when he arrived at his Dublin pub, the Baggot Inn, for lunch after the meeting yesterday. He was greeted with warm applause but refused to add anything to his statement, apart from

saying that he intended to have a good night out in Dublin.

"I'd like to thank the people of Ireland and the FAI for making these ten years the happiest of my life," he said in his statement.

"I have many friends in Ireland, the country is in my blood now and I intend to spend a lot of time here in the future among my friends."

Roy Keane, the Manchester United midfielder player and a regular in the Ireland team,

said yesterday that Charlton had done a "fantastic job."

The FAI is turning its attention to the succession. "We are now entering a new era and a smooth transition is essential," Kilcoyne said.

Mick McCarthy, the Millwall manager, a centre half in Charlton's own image who was the manager's longest-serving captain, would be a popular choice, and he was here yesterday "for my usual Christmas shopping trip".

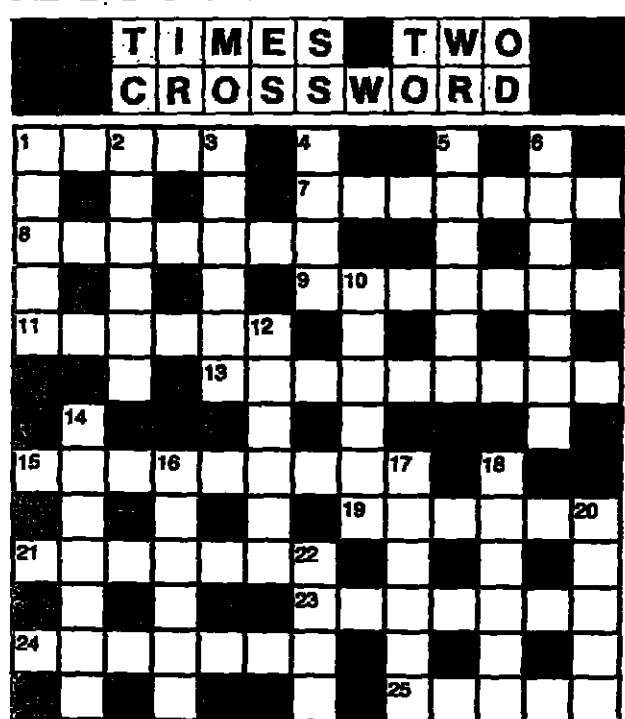
Fortuitous, but though McCarthy is a popular favourite, he may not fit the bill described by Kilcoyne yesterday.

"Jack has raised our status, the level of football and our image, and we can't let that go away," Kilcoyne said. "We must have a manager who can build on the legacy he has left, and that would be a top-flight, experienced manager."

That would appear to make McCarthy, and former colleagues such as Liam Brady, Mark Lawrenson and

Frank Stapleton, or Joe Kinnear, the Wimbledon manager, seem outside possibilities. A more likely option is Kenny Dalglish, although Howard Kendall would fit the bill, and Alex Ferguson would be ideal, but it remains to be seen whether the FAI thinks it is even worth considering trying to prise him away from Old Trafford.

Meanwhile, Charlton was left to enjoy his Guinness and reminiscences as he went round Dublin last night.



No 659

ACROSS

- 1 Distinctive theme (5)
- 7 Altered in fit (7)
- 9 Museum manager (7)
- 11 Add casually, without extra charge (5,2)
- 13 Deliberate cruelty (6)
- 15 Car with rear sloping door (9)
- 17 Create a fuss (5,4)
- 19 Inexperienced (youth) (6)
- 21 Official journal (7)
- 23 Green and flourishing (7)
- 24 Connection (7)
- 25 Sardonically (5)

DOWN

- 1 Trial exams; makes fun of (5)
- 2 Stream of abuse (6)
- 3 Object of irrational respect (6)
- 4 Wagon (4)
- 5 Self-assurance, poise (6)
- 6 Enchant (7)
- 10 Flushed; busy (6)
- 12 One bringing good luck (6)
- 14 Obsessive devotee (7)
- 16 Underhand (6)
- 17 Of small width (6)
- 18 NY state capital; husband of Goneril (6)
- 20 Pathetically feebly (5)
- 22 Just; regular (4)

The solution to 658 will be published Wednesday, December 27

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Walker left standing in game of managerial musical chairs

Russell Kempson sees a familiar figure miss out as O'Neill and Lawrence move in

IN LITTLE more than two years, Mike Walker's managerial career has plummeted from the peak of success to the trough of despair. Yesterday, he reached rock bottom - missing out on the jobs at Leicester City and Luton Town, his confusion over whether to laugh or cry manifesting itself in a stinging rebuke aimed at Martin George, the Leicester chairman.

With Martin O'Neill succeeding Mark McGhee at Leicester and Les McKeown replacing Terry Westley at Luton, Walker, 50, was left with nowhere to go in the Endleigh Insurance League first division.

It was of little consolation that he had been within a hair's breadth of taking over at both clubs. His 13-month break from the game, since being dismissed by Everton, thus continues.

Walker was keen to air his grievances. "The whole managerial merry-go-round is a disgrace," he said. "I'm not disappointed about what happened - I'm very annoyed. It appears I've been left up the garden path. I spoke with Leicester three times and I was under the impression I had got the job."

"I had heard the rumours about Martin O'Neill, but it wasn't until last night that I got a phone call. If they wanted to appoint someone they felt could do a better job, that's fair enough, but it's disappointing when you get treated like this. It leaves a sour taste in the mouth."

On Sunday, Walker had expected to be announced as the new Leicester manager - after the match, ironically, against Norwich City at Fil-

bert Street. His interview with George, two days earlier, had gone well. However, 3½ hours before the game, O'Neill resigned at the team hotel. His increasingly frosty relationship with Robert Chase, the Norwich chairman, had deteriorated beyond repair.

Acutely aware of O'Neill's credentials, Walker decided to cover all the angles by also applying for the Luton vacancy, created when Westley left by "mutual consent" on Monday. Again, his interview went encouragingly, with David Kohler, the Luton chairman, impressed. Again, though, Walker had a serious rival - Lawrence, the former manager of Charlton Athletic, Middlesbrough and Bradford City.

Walker's error was to turn down Luton, still believing that he had strong claims of being installed at Filbert Street. "David Kohler wanted a quick answer from me,

which was fair enough," Walker said. "I could possibly have been offered the position with Luton, but I had to make a decision and I told David I would leave it. The Leicester job was still outstanding and it appealed to me."

George has agreed compensation with Norwich for the loss of O'Neill, who had 18 months left on his two-year contract. Paul Franklin, his assistant at Carrow Road, and Steve Walford, the reserve team manager, will be accompanying him. George also conceded that Walker had been his first choice until O'Neill's sudden availability. O'Neill, 43, could have joined Leicester a year ago, in the wake of the acrimonious departure of Brian Little, who is now at Aston Villa. Then at Wycombe Wanderers, O'Neill said: "I did not take the offer purely for reasons of timing. I still held what I suppose was a nonsensical dream that Wyc-

combe could carry on climbing the leagues."

Yesterday, after signing a 2½-year contract, he said: "I can understand the Leicester fans being worried about loyalty, but I had ten years at Nottingham Forest and five years as manager at Wycombe, where I had chances to move on to bigger clubs but didn't go."

"It would be untrue of me to say the position at Leicester did not have some bearing on my decision to leave Norwich, but I have no intention of using Leicester as a stepping stone."

Walker, like O'Neill, left Norwich after falling out with Chase over his refusal to release funds for team strengthening. He departed, in January last year, after leading Norwich to third place in the FA Premier League and only three months after mastering the remarkable victory over Bayern Munich in the Uefa Cup second round, which included a 2-1 win in Germany.

He signed a 3½-year contract at Everton, amid accusations of "poaching" from Chase, but his stay ended after ten months. His frustration at being out of the game for so long is beginning to show. Any thoughts of him returning to Norwich, however risible, were scotched yesterday when Gary Megson, the assistant manager at Bradford City, was offered the post. He accepted immediately, but Bradford are reluctant to allow him to leave. Megson was caretaker manager at Carrow Road, replacing John Deehan, for five matches at the end of last season as Norwich slipped out of the FA Carling Premiership.



O'Neill: new job

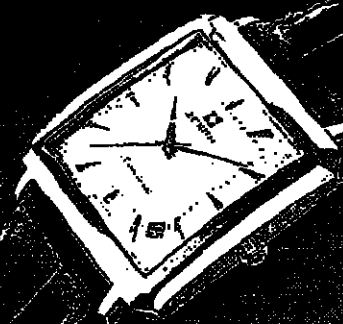


Walker: frustrated

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